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SCHOOL COUNSELOR PERCEPTIONS AND COMPETENCIES FOR CLOSING
THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELOR AND HIGHER
EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR ALL EDUCATORS

By

Susan Rardon Rose
B.S., University of Louisville, 1992
M. Ed., University of Louisville, 1999

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Counseling and Psychology
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2007

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A Dissertation Approved On

September 4, 2007

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Dr. Pedro R. Portes, Co-Chair

Dr. Daya Sandhu, Co-Chair

Dr. Sandra Duncan

Dr. Amy Hirschy

Dr. Carol Montgomery

DEDICATION

To my husband of twenty-four years, Robert E. Rose, and
our children, David Robert Rose and Lauren Rose Brown
along with Lauren's husband, Anthony Joseph Brown.

Thank you for always being in my corner and for putting
up with me as I researched and wrote. And, I can't forget
my parents for providing the value system to revere an
education and to persist in my dreams. I love you all!!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am also appreciative of the support given me by my program committee members, Dr. Daya Sandhu, chair, Dr. John Dillard, and Dr. Nancy Cunningham. Your assistance in completing the program to be ready for the comprehensive final is very much valued.

I will always be indebted to my husband, Robert Rose, for standing behind me. And special thanks to my children, David, Lauren, and Tony for putting up with the time it took to create this dissertation in published form.

Thanks to my extended family for providing such great examples of the value of education: Walter and Mary Lou Keeton (Grampsy and Granny), Ginger and Carl Rardon (Mom and Dad), Kim Rardon Metzger (my beautiful twin), Jason Rardon (my “little” brother), Rachel Rardon (Jason’s lovely bride), Phil and Joe Metzger (Kim’s husband and son), and the many aunts, uncles, and cousins too numerous to mention. The family bond has been and continues to be priceless!

Gratitude to many individuals, organizations, offices, and agencies who shared information and contacts. Thanks, too, to the many professional educators who helped with expertise and support.

ABSTRACT

SCHOOL COUNSELOR PERCEPTIONS AND COMPETENCIES FOR CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELOR AND HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR ALL EDUCATORS

Susan R. Rose

September 4, 2007

“If this generation of youth is lost, much of the hope for an economically, socially and technologically strong nation will also be lost.”

- Kuykendall, 1992

When youths become convinced that they will not be able to make it in mainstream America, they tend to take the skills they have and use them to take the low roads of life. Even though all citizens will ultimately be affected by the success or failure of these youths, it is a challenge for educators to provide ways to prepare them to choose the high road as the path for their lives. The 1979 research of Ron Edmonds (Kuykendall, 1992) suggests that, despite the negative influences of home and community, schools can positively impact the achievement of children. An effective educator can give a child hope, and with hope a child can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles.

This study focuses on the leaders of the school, and more specifically the counselor, in helping to lead the charge in preparing these students. That is, this

study investigates how the school counselor can best be prepared to assist in the travails both within and outside of the classroom in order to improve student outcomes and the school experience for all. The plan is to offer hope for these children in the way of preparing their administrative counselors to offer the social and emotional support that brings about academic achievement.

The literature review found much support for the need to address the achievement gap between Students Placed at Risk (SPARS) and further support that the leadership of the school has a great deal of responsibility in closing this gap. Several articles reported that the counselor can heavily influence the achievement of students in a positive direction. School counselors are being encouraged to serve as mentors, personal support systems, and advocates for disadvantaged and minority students within the educational setting. The challenge for our profession is to integrate this new vision into existing school counseling programs.

To that end, the study moved in the direction of how best to prepare school counselors to take on that responsibility. Practical implications and research direction for this study were drawn from these conclusions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*We need to be the change
we want to see happen.
We are the leaders
we have been waiting for.
- Gandhi*

Once thought to be the “best years of one’s life” or “the good ol’ days”, the students in today’s schools are experiencing difficulties that their parents did not face. They are expected to learn more at a much faster pace with conflicting emotional struggles coming at them from all directions with each passing day. These student expectations place a greater expectation on their educators as well to prepare them for these academic and emotional struggles. How is it possible to balance the emotional reality of children’s developmental needs with the necessity to show academic success?

This debate has tended to divide children’s learning along two axes, the emotional and the academic. Either we can address children’s academic performance, the conventional thinking holds, or we can address their emotional and social needs. Before more children suffer from this divide, it is necessary to deliver some important news: The two kinds of learning are intimately connected. That means that promoting students’ social and emotional skills plays a critical role in improving their academic performance (Shriver & Weissberg, 2005).

Now, the question becomes, “How do we promote students’ social and emotional skills so that their academic performance improves?” This challenge brings in the dilemma of how educators are going to break down the barriers of emotional challenges in order to increase academic performance. To facilitate addressing this more effectively, the needs analysis will break down the problem into the traditional “W” system:

- Why should social and emotional struggles be addressed at all in the academic arena?
- When and where should these dual challenges of addressing the underlying concern of emotion in order to improve the basic concern of academic improvement be addressed and at what levels?
- Who is the best person within the spectrum of educators to spearhead the new plan?
- What should be included in the curriculum to address these emotional struggles?

Needs Analysis

As discussed later in the structure section of this chapter, the responses to these questions will be presented in the form of a needs analysis because any problem must first analyze the need in order to form a more functional approach to the challenge. The answer to why has already been addressed with acknowledging that our children are expected to learn more at a much faster rate with newer and greater emotional challenges coming at them from all directions with each passing day. But, even this statement needs

further explanation. That is, why have the expectations for students in American schools increased? That answer seems to be a connection of a two-fold explanation:

1. Society has changed with ever-increasing speed with technology and the communication era, made famous in the most recent days with publications such as Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat* (2005) as well as the general knowledge brought to us each day by the media.
2. The ever increasing diversity of the current population causing the population within the schools to be more and more diverse.

Because the primary focus of this paper addresses the achievement gap brought on by the diversity within schools, we will concentrate on that topic in more depth. Still, it cannot be ignored that these ideas are connected and intertwined. The technology age has brought about the era that has caused us to move, mix and become so diverse a population. As society as a whole becomes a diverse population, it becomes obvious that our schools will reflect this diverse population.

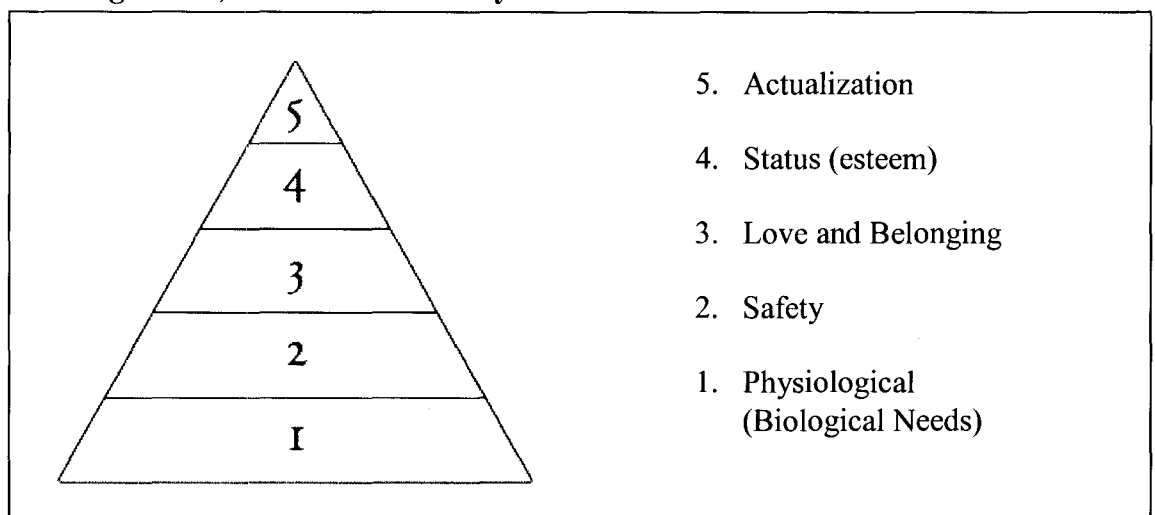
As public education serves this diverse body of students in a variety of school settings, students enter these educational environments influenced by both positive and negative circumstances within and outside of their control. Among these influences or forces impacting these students is the environment provided by the family. The numbers tell the story. The Children's Defense Fund (2004), reported the following key facts about American children:

- ▶ 1 child in 3 will be poor at some point in their childhood;

- ▶ 1 child in 3 is behind a year or more in school;
- ▶ 1 child in 4 lives with only one parent;
- ▶ 1 child in 24 lives with neither parent;
- ▶ 1 child in 5 is born to a mother who did not graduate from high school;
- ▶ 1 child in 7 never graduates from high school; 2 in 5 children who are eligible for Head Start do not participate;
- ▶ 1 child in 8 has no health insurance;
- ▶ 1 child in 12 has a disability; and
- ▶ 1 child in 1,339 will be killed by guns before age 20.

These factors seem to place a child at risk even before they can begin to learn as given in Maslow's hierarchy represented below in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1, Maslow's Hierarchy

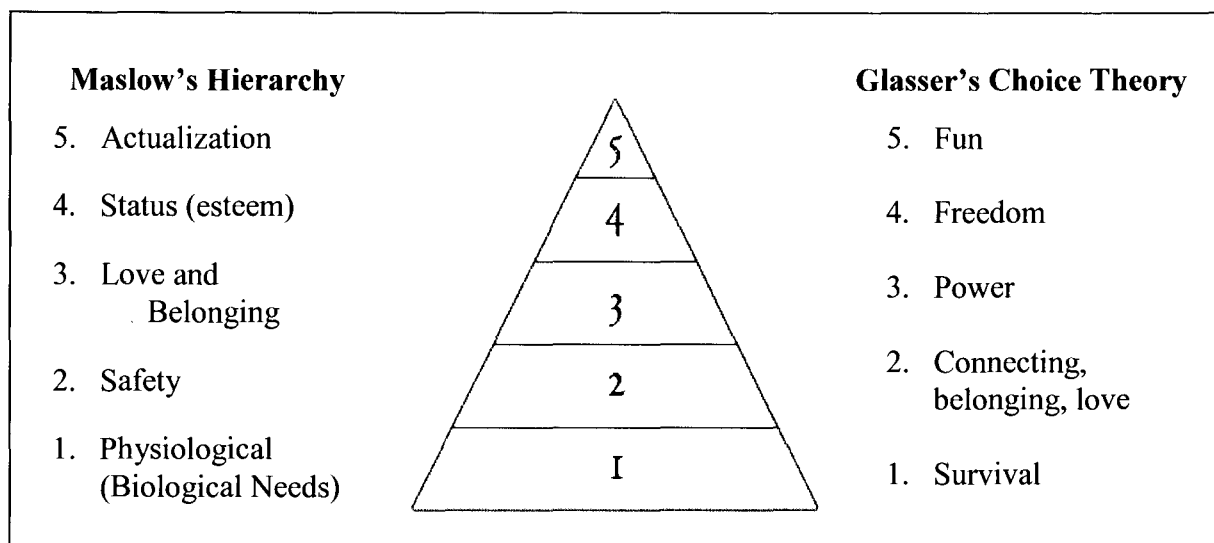


William Glasser's reality therapy, represented alongside Maslow's Hierarchy in Figure 1.2, further supports this idea as this theory is centered on five basic, genetically

endowed needs as well. The first is our primary and physical need for survival – including food, clothing, nourishment, shelter, and personal security – and the following four are physiological:

- Connecting, belonging, love,
- Power – including learning, achievement and feeling worthwhile and winning,
- Freedom – including independence, autonomy one's own space,
- Fun – including pleasure and enjoyment.

Figure 1.2 Human Needs



In Glasser's theory, all people are forming a self-identity. We either form a success or failure identity. The basic routes to success identity are fulfilling the above needs in ways that involve others but are not at the expense of others. Most of the students who fall into the category labeled by society as students placed at risk (SPARS) seem to have developed a failure identity. They think of themselves as failure and, thus,

carry out that self-fulfilling prophesy. (Of course, the idea of resiliency causes some to succeed against the odds and become exceptions. But, that is an entirely different study. This study focuses on those children who buy into the idea that they cannot succeed regardless of their efforts and act on those beliefs of failure).

The influence of poverty that creates this failure identity starts when children begin their formal educational lives, as reflected by the number of children in pre-kindergarten who qualify for free and reduced lunch. The Condition of Education (Wirt, Choy, Provasnik, Rooney, Sen & Tobin, 2004) reported that in 2000-2001, 61% of pre-kindergarten children were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Of these students, 39% were in high-poverty public schools and just 11% were in low-poverty schools. Growing up in poverty leaves some children thinking about eating and safety rather than schoolwork. If they can't get their biological needs met, then they cannot reach the level of status or esteem where education can be valued.

The last statistic in the list from The Children's Defense Fund (2004) is frightening for children who witness tragedies of gun violence. Children cannot be focused on reading and writing if they cannot play in their neighborhood without fear. Safety is crucial for these children to reach the level where they can value an education and focus on learning. We, as educators, cannot overlook this basic understanding of human needs. People, in general, must hurdle across two to three major "divides" before they can reach the level of valuing an education within the realm of status or power! So, it is up to educators – and especially administrators leading the school – to address this

divide so that these students want to learn above and beyond these hurdles they are facing.

Steven Wolk (2007) states, “If the purpose of our schools is to prepare drones to keep the U.S. economy going, then the prevailing curricula and instructional methods are probably adequate. If however, we want to help students become thoughtful, caring citizens who might be creative enough to figure out how to change the status quo rather than maintain it, we need to rethink schooling entirely.” (p. 648) This kind of schooling that addresses thinking and caring provides the foundation necessary to help these students across the hurdles they are facing.

Promoting students’ social and emotional skills allows them to understand and interact with others, to make good decisions and to behave ethically and responsibly. Joseph Durlak, a Loyola University psychologist, and Roger Weissberg, a University of Illinois psychologist, conducted the largest-ever quantitative analysis, encompassing more than 300 research studies on this subject. The results show that social and emotional learning programs significantly improve students’ academic performance. The review shows that an average student enrolled in a social and emotional learning program ranks at least 10 percentile points higher on achievement tests than students who do not participate in such programs. Moreover, compared with their counterparts outside of these programs, social and emotional learning students have significantly better attendance records; their classroom behavior is more constructive and less often disruptive; they like school more; and they have better grade point averages. They are less likely to be suspended or otherwise disciplined. The numbers vindicate what has

long been common sense among many teachers and parents: that children who are given clear behavior standards and social skills, allowing them to feel safe, valued, confident and challenged, will exhibit better school behavior and learn more to boot (Shriver & Weissberg, 2005).

The basic principle is that all students, to be optimally motivated to learn and thus close the achievement gap, need to feel a sense security, love, belonging and connectedness before they can accept the basic concept of learning. They must continue to feel this connectedness in terms of competence, autonomy, and relatedness to others in the learning setting to feel motivated to learn.

In today's schools, administrative leaders within the school must face the dual challenge of preparing students to meet the expectations of higher academic standards as well as addressing the emotional challenges related to poverty. It is the responsibility of all educators to help these students become productive and contributing members of society as the public has repeatedly challenged *all* educators to deliver education, which results in high levels of learning for *all* students – including the poor. This paper will discuss in detail a plan for addressing both needs – the emotional challenges that underlie the problem as well as the academic needs that lay on the surface – because they are so intertwined as accepted in theory that one cannot be disentangled from the other.

We now come to the dilemma of where and when should these dual challenges be addressed and at what levels? That is, where and when within the context of educational curriculum are our students receiving preparation, materials and curriculum to address both academic and emotional needs. Decades of research have not provided adequate

answers to guide schools in these higher expectations of high accountability and continuous improvement of the twenty-first century. Understandably, widespread concern about public education has increased and pressure for schools to adequately serve every student regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity has intensified. A recent reform publication stated that “by the year 2020, the majority of America’s public school students will be living under conditions that place them at risk of education failure. The trend toward even higher percentages of poorly housed, malnourished, abused, and neglected children is inarguable” (Irmsher, 1997, p.1). This makes addressing the need even more urgent.

So, what should be included in a plan to address the need in terms of educational curriculum within the preparation years of elementary, middle and high schools? The tried and failed educational reform efforts in the United States have been incomplete endeavors comprised of directives that were either not connected, or worse yet, contradictory (e.g., the need was probably social and emotional skills but the law-making body passed legislation that mandated new basic skills tests). The result was often increased fragmentation between policy and classroom practice and consequently even more disjointed approaches to improving schools than those, which had existed prior to the reform attempt (O’Neil, 1995).

The first restructuring or reorganization that I remember was “A Nation At Risk” (1983) during the 1980’s. This set the tone, then, for public discourse on education. School districts came under great pressure to raise academic standards, lengthen the

school day, implement state-mandated basic curricula, and otherwise become more accountable to taxpayers. But, by and large, the advocates of “educational excellence” at that time paid virtually no attention to addressing the urgent personal or emotional needs of our students.

The 1990’s ushered in the “new” reform, Goals 2000 (1998), where more concern was given to the “whole” student so that graduates could compete better in the current economy. This was hailed as a new school of thought unlike the reform movement of the past decade and was to take into full account students’ personal needs in formulating educational goals. Proponents of this school of thought recognized the close relationship between students’ academic development and their personal growth.

Yet, the question of who should address this relationship has been left out of the research. It seems that the primary person charged with addressing both the academic and emotional development would be the best suited to spearhead this new preparation plan. This would place the school counselor and his/her program at the heart of the educational process.

Helping students succeed in school and develop the social and self-management skills needed for effective learning, working, and relating seems to be a direct fit with the American School Counseling Association’s three national standards categories: academic, personal/social, and career (Campbell & Dahir, 1997).

Nonetheless, the newest reform – *The No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) – has the school system still floundering as to what effect school counseling and guidance is

actually having on the student's academic ability. Progress in this area seems to be cyclical at best, if not stepping back. That is, research even now has not addressed the specific role of the counselor. The job description is different from school to school, district to district, and state to state. A consensus needs to be addressed so that a basic preparation program can be consistent across university preparation programs. Yet, as consistency across the nation is a monumental task, this paper will begin by focusing on the preparation programs within Kentucky and the surrounding areas.

As the bottom line today in education is student achievement, counseling programs that are focused on student support as well as academic improvement will ensure that counselors continue to serve in a vital role in schools. This may seem to be a philosophic change in thinking of the counselor role as most view the role as simply that of student support. But, as mentioned earlier, emotional and academic learning are intimately connected. That is, promoting students' social and emotional skills – already in the area of school support – plays a critical role in improving their academic performance. The preparation programs should be moving in the direction of preparing counselors to provide this social and emotional support for all students in order to improve the academic performance of all students.

Background to This Study

*Learning cannot be legislated and making educators accountable
does not necessarily produce success. - Goodlad*

Kentucky's education system was historically one of the nation's worst. In the past, equal learning opportunities were not available for Kentucky students in the varying demographic locations of the state as the funds were distributed based on income from each demographic area and disbursed as such. Therefore, poor communities received less educational funding per child (Sexton, 1995).

Kentucky's response to the inequality of learning opportunities came as a result of a lawsuit. After exhaustive studies were completed to determine the best educational methods available, statewide reforms were enforced. This was introduced as the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. The KERA legislated initiative declared, "Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education" (Rose v. Council for Better Education, 1989, p.25).

The implicit intent of KERA was the restructuring of school practices in ways that would result in higher levels of total school success, which meant that even poor students would learn. Accountability for all students – including students who have never achieved success in the past – was supposed to become a reality because no student was to be excluded when improvement was measured.

Learning cannot be legislated and making educators accountable does not necessarily produce success (Goodlad, 1984). Even with Kentucky's legislated accountability, not all schools are successful. This is presented later, within the literature review in an extensive examination of reform, both historical and current. The question of specific accountability remains unanswered. That is, what – as in program or policy –

or who is failing the children? Education research has historically targeted principals as the leaders of schools and the most responsible individual in their school's improvement effort. But, the job has proven to be overwhelming in many schools as the scores show. School improvement, especially that of closing the achievement gap, must be a team effort. The principal who shares the load with the person(s) responsible for school support, the counselor(s), will have a much higher likelihood of improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap. The counselor needs to be prepared within the university program to share this responsibility. And, that brings this study to its primary focus – that of preparing the school counselor within the framework of the university counselor preparation program.

Structure of the Study

As the counselor preparation program seems to be in need, the structure of this paper will follow that of the Exceptional Child Education (ECE) process. We will first lay out the need of using the counselor program to close the achievement gap in the form of a needs analysis. (Chapter 1) We will then address that need with interventions that have already been put into place, followed by the details of why these specific interventions have not worked. Along with the interventions, we will also collect work samples as such to show a history of the counselor program's work as well as any other pertinent information or reports that demonstrate the performance levels of the current counselor programs along with the preparation programs that prepare counselors. (Chapter 2) This brings us to the full-fledged referral step of evaluating the program on all its levels with defining the components that need to be evaluated as on the IDEA-3 or

Consent to Evaluate. (Chapter 3) The next step is to review that evaluation to see whether the program is eligible for an Individual Education Plan, known throughout the study as the Counselor Education Plan. (Chapter 4) Once we find that the program is eligible for a specialized education plan, we will write the plan delineating the Present Levels of Educational Performance in relation to the current Counselor's preparation programs and moving on to write goals for the preparation program. Finally, we will end with detailing the supplementary aids and services of accommodations that the program needs at this time in order to meet the goals that we have set along with the settings at which these goals and accommodations are to be addressed. (Chapter 5)

Statement of the Problem

An effective educator can give a child hope, and with hope a child can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles.

- Kuykendall, 1992

When children become convinced that they will not be able to make it in society as a "grown-up", they tend to take the skills they have and use them to take the low roads of life. Even though society as a whole will ultimately be affected by the success or failure of these children, it is a challenge for educators in particular to provide ways to prepare them to choose the high road as the path for their lives.

The 1979 research of Ron Edmonds (Kuykendall, 1992) suggests that, despite the negative influences of home and community, schools, through the programs they offer, can positively impact the achievement of children. Many students spend more time with their "school family" than they do with their home families. An effective educator can

give a child hope, and with hope a child can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles. Without hope, a child's life is likely to become meaningless, and there is a greater likelihood for negative behaviors. When youths lose hope, they end up with a more destructive emotion – rage (Kuykendall, 1992).

This is when children revert back to the initial stages of development as previously mentioned in the discussion of Maslow and Glasser. It is up to educators to provide this hope and, thus, pull these students across the divide so that they can learn. Providing the plan for fostering this hope is the foundation of the problem. That is, students need a reason to hope, and educators can provide this reason.

“Students can hit any achievement target that they can see, and that will stand still for them.” (Sprick, Garrison & Howard, 1998, p. 282) While the authors use this phrase to refer to behavior, it is applicable in all areas. Someone needs to make the target for closing the achievement gap visible to all within the school and ensure that the target remains consistent and still. As the support person within the school, it seems natural that this role would fall to the counselor to provide the foundation from which the principal builds the curriculum and evaluates the teachers. “Clearly, school counselors have a significant role to play in ensuring student success. Because they have a school-wide perspective on serving the needs of every student, schools counselors are in an ideal position to serve as advocates for all students and as agents for removing systemic barriers to academic success.” (Paisley and Hayes, 2003, p.2) Hence, the counselor needs to be prepared to do so.

Yet, there seems to be a knowledge gap between what counselors need and want to do versus what they know how to do. Although research exists on students placed at

risk and on counselor preparation programs, a new inquiry into the relationship of the two with regard to this particular group of students is needed. An understanding of the appropriate content within the counselor preparation program would contribute to identifying areas of possible development for the university programs. This understanding will assist both the counselors and the staff with which they work in an awareness of students placed at risk of school failure. Information gathered through this research could inform university personnel about the necessary courses required within the new program. Also, information gained is useful in analyzing whether current practices match perceived needs of counselors and educators.

Theoretical Context and Framework

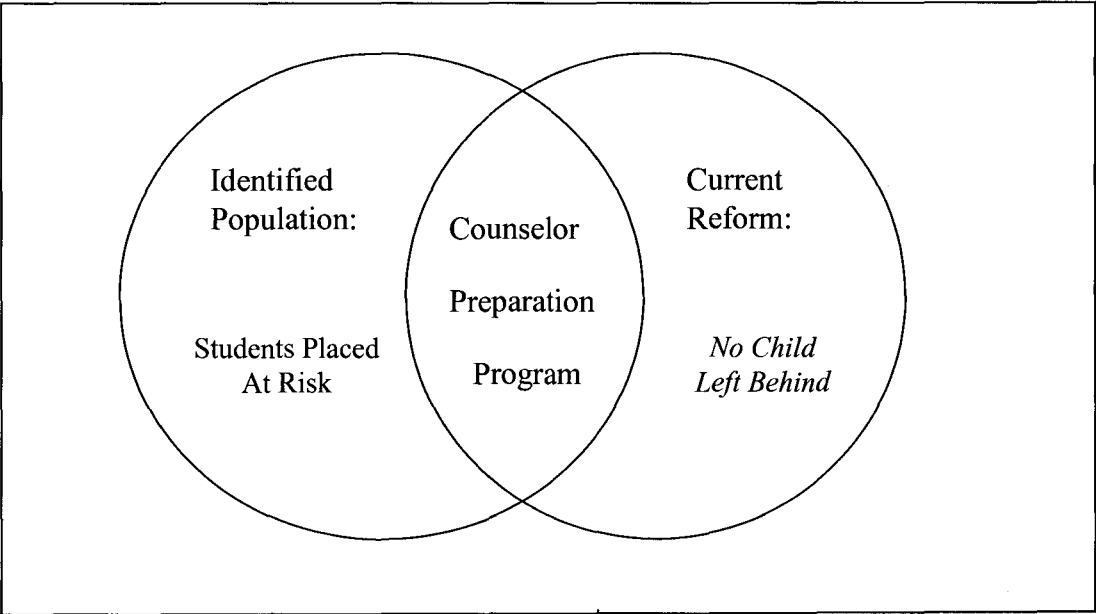
The counselor is the support person acting as mediator who ensures that a child's education is safeguarded against poverty. *– Pedro Portes*

As students placed at risk bring their special challenges to the educational arena, educators increasingly feel the pressure of working with students who may not benefit from today's educational policies and practices, often because they come to school with problems that cannot be addressed in a six to seven hour school day (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994). Exploring the accessibility of training for educators so that pressure can be relieved, enabling counselors to better support these students is the central focus of this inquiry.

This area of interest, students placed at risk, along with the school reform movements has a strong impact on the third of interest, counselor preparation programs,

because the counselor is the central figure in the educational system held responsible for both the emotional well-being and the academic success of all students. This intersection of interests allows the exploration of how counselor preparation programs, within the framework of school reform, provides educators with an understanding of students placed at risk. The first area of interest, school reform, provides a conceptual framework for understanding the requirements and implications of current educational movements on this particular group of students. The second area of interest, students placed at risk, reflects the specific impact of school reform on these students placed at risk. To meet the specific needs of these students, counselors must be aware of and have knowledge about issues facing them. Therefore, the third area of review becomes counselor preparation programs as these relate to assisting counselors to work with students placed at risk. The Counselor Preparation Program is the component that blends these three areas of inquiry together. The linkages among these areas are illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Intersection of students placed at risk and the reforms of the *No Child Left Behind Act* with the Counselor Preparation Program.



The variety of education reform efforts that have been launched in the last decade to address the achievement gap between these students placed at risk and their more advantaged peers have yet to include school counselors, as members of the school community, as a major player in these efforts (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). A report published by the College Board in 1992 went as far as to conclude that school counselors have historically functioned as the “gatekeepers” of the education system, taking on roles that involve reactive, rather than proactive, approaches (Hart & Jacobi, 1992). It is now time for counselors to move into the proactive, preventative approach.

In 1997, the Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds and Education Trust launched The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI), based on the assumption that school counselors can and should serve as “proactive leaders and advocates for high achievement for all students, especially poor and minority youth” (The Education Trust, 2000, p.1). As leaders and advocates, school counselors must:

- Believe that all students have the capacity to achieve;
- Seek out and identify institutional obstacles to learning and achievement;
- Extend and improve the resources available both in the school and the community to address the academic and personal/social needs of students; and
- Be accountable for student achievement. (Seppanen and Laird, 2002)

In summary, it is the counselor’s basic responsibility to be an advocate for those who don’t have parents, guardians or other adults in their lives who can advocate for them. That is, it is the counselors’ job to provide the supports and interventions that offer

social and emotional skills so that these students can function on an equal playing field in the academic arena.

Portes (2005) life-span developmental model lays out the basic procedures for intervening on the part of these children from cultures placed at risk.

The model consists of organizing action at four levels:

- Better pre-school preparation for all SPAR's,
- Elementary school supports,
- Life-skills adolescent curriculum, and
- Higher education transformation in preparing educators and decision-makers (p. 102).

As the components are designed to work together in order to have a significant population effect, the idea of the counselor leading a collaborative effort both within and outside the school makes this plan most efficacious. The model practically lays out the counselors' responsibilities within each age level:

- Better pre-school programs are easily led by the elementary school counselors as they are also responsible for pre-school as these programs are usually housed within elementary schools and share that counselor;
- Elementary counselors are act as school support for the K-5 students, their primary responsibility;
- Middle school counselors task is to offer life-skills curriculum; and

- High school counselors continue the task of offering life-skills curriculum and helping students to become better decision-makers as they prepare for college and/or career.

Currently, educators are working in isolation putting into place programs in a classroom-by-classroom basis. This goes against all other fields of practice. In medicine, it is expected that doctors, nurses, and other professional staff work in tandem calling meetings to discuss difficult cases. Yet, with education's most difficult case – that of closing the achievement gap – educators just keep putting band-aids on a deep gash, hoping the wound will somehow heal.

This patient is very sick! We need a complete examination in order to diagnose the difficulty. Then, we can treat it. For purposes of this paper, we are going to focus on the counselor's responsibility as a medical team would do if confronted with varying illnesses. For instance, a patient presents with symptoms of seeing spots in his vision, loss of speech, and loss of muscle control. The team of doctors might consist of a family practitioner, optician, ophthalmologist, speech pathologist, physical therapist, and neurosurgeon. The entire team would collaborate and work together, but one would need to lead the team. In this case, it would probably be the neurologist as the symptoms seem to point in that general direction and he has the most training. In the case of this paper, the counselor will act as leader as s/he is usually given the responsibility of support person within the school. The task then becomes making the counselor the most

trained member on the team around closing the achievement gap in terms of improving social and emotional support for these students.

The counselor preparation program at the university level seems to be the best place to begin this influence on the counselor's ability to develop these skills. Appropriate counselor preparation will help provide the training that is needed for all educators within the collaborative support level of the counselor to work better with students placed at risk, allowing them to benefit from current educational reforms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the knowledge and attitudes of practicing counselors regarding their counselor preparation programs in relation to being able to address the needs of students placed at risk. This study focuses on the counselor, as the counselor is the part of the administration held most responsible for student support, and the one usually in more direct contact with the teachers – the front-line of our education system.

The research questions are:

- (1) Does the program content in current counselor preparation programs satisfy the knowledge base needed for professional competency in relation to closing the achievement and supporting students placed at risk? That is, do the current counselors in today's schools feel that their preparation program prepared them for the demands of the counselor position they now hold in relation to promoting students' social and emotional skills so that their

academic performance improves – especially those students that fall into the SPARS category?

- (2) What are the best courses to offer in counselor preparation programs so that counselors are better prepared to promote students' social and emotional skills in order to improve their academic achievement?

Significance of the Study

As the numbers of students placed at risk of school failure increases, the consequences of their failing to function in today's educational environment are clear. Although research studies have examined the factors that placed students at risk of school failure, and other studies have examined a changed view of university preparation programs, little information is available on the counselor's role, through systematic support, to assist this population of students. This study adds to the scholarly research and literature in the field of students placed at risk and counselor preparation programs by merging these two fields of study together.

The findings and conclusions of this study provide information concerning the quality and type of counselor preparation programs offered to counselors at the university level in relation to the reforms, which purport to address the achievement gap. These findings offer insights concerning counselor preparation programs that specifically target this group of students.

Counselor Educators may find the study useful because it provides data about university preparation programs to meet an increasingly diverse group of students. Both

counselor preparation programs within the universities and colleges of Kentucky and the surrounding areas as well as the counselors within these programs can benefit from this information. The study also has important implications for school districts' personnel offices, which may find the study interesting because it assumed the importance of counselor's job assignments and duties.

Training materials for counselor preparation programs and mentoring programs for counselors could incorporate findings from this study. Institutions of higher education could use the information for preparing individuals to enter the counseling profession and on-going professional development for counselors and all administrative leaders. Mentoring programs, which foster collaboration between strong counselors and those counselors needing additional professional growth, could be developed around data from this study.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

This study was descriptive in nature. It attempted to investigate school counselors' perceptions of their own programs within the schools as well as their University preparation programs by asking the school counselors to complete a survey [Appendix A] regarding their counselor programs in relation to closing the achievement gap, other counseling job factors, and the coursework in their individual programs. Participants were school counselors working in grade levels K – 12 in the various districts around Kentucky. The study, conducted in a specific eastern region limits its generalizability to other areas in the east and of similar regions in the United States. More information could be available from other schools in a more further outreach.

Some other limitations are:

1. The researcher assumed that the local schools districts would have counseling offices staffed with counselors whose training would address the research questions.
2. Only information gathered from the local schools districts was used in the study.
3. Only current classes that applied to the Counseling Preparation program as it has been known were used. There could be other appropriate classes/course content that could have been utilized.

Other limitations and delimitations more specific to the analysis method are described in Chapter III.

Achievement Gap Defined

The greatest tragedy is to destroy the enthusiasm of a child. - Karl Ericson

Webster's dictionary defines gap as, "(1) an opening made by breaking or parting; (2) a blank space; or (3) a lag or disparity". Applying this definition to achievement, which Webster's defines as "(1) to do successfully; or (2) to get by effort," achievement gap can be literally defined as a lag or disparity which causes a break or parting in one's academic success. Basically, an achievement gap is the disparity between the academic performances of different groups of students.

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides some of the clearest evidence on the achievement gap. By the end of fourth grade,

African-American, Latino, and poor students of all races are two years behind other students. By eighth grade, they have slipped three years behind. And when they reach twelfth grade, poor and minority students are about four years behind. This means that the average 17-year-old African-American and Latino student is at the same academic level as a 13-year-old white student (Haycock, Jerald, & Huang, 2001). There are similarly startling statistics about gaps in higher education. For example, college-attendance rates for Latino and African-American students who have graduated from high school are far below those of whites (Haycock et al., 2001).

Pedro Portes argues that children are placed at-risk long before they experience many of the consequences associated with group-based inequalities in education (Portes, 2005). The term “placed at risk” is an important distinction from the basic “at risk” as the word *placed* implies that someone or something put these children in this situation. They were not just plucked from thin air and labeled as such; they did not simply draw the short straw. The cycle of poverty is unjust because it takes perfectly competent children – our nation’s most valuable resource – and under develops their potential by maintaining a series of barriers such as large class sizes, tracking, an age-graded system, resegregation, and teacher expertise that most families living in poverty (Rank, 2004) are unable to overcome (Portes, 2005). As a general population, we are all born equal. That is, each ethnic group and each SES group has an equal proportion of special needs children alongside the average and above average learners. It is the 800 pound gorilla of poverty that creates the difference, now commonly known as the achievement gap. The most distressing and unsettling fact is that after thirty years of reforms and programs for students placed at risk, the achievement gap remains constant.

SPAR's receive the equivalent of only a middle school education, while the majority graduate with a high school education, based on meeting proficient standards for grade-level performance (Portes, 1996). Hence, this study will use the term achievement gap to refer to the difference between poor, minority students and their middle-class, white counterparts.

Knowledge Base Defined

It is important to address the issues that compose the knowledge base counselors share in their professional training. Even if a common basis or structure of the knowledge base remains to be established, we can come closer to a consensus by presenting a framework of the knowledge base considered in this study. The knowledge base for the school counselor is reflected in the knowledge necessary to be able to support the students. The fundamental framework for this knowledge base is articulated in ten general learning outcomes as given below:

1. Knowledge of the historical development of the professional and foundational issues and arguments underlying the practices of school counselors, as well as understanding of the importance of integrated learning across disciplines.
2. Knowledge of subject-matter content and the ability to integrate content with pedagogy appropriate to the school counseling field.
3. Knowledge of human development and motivation, theories of learning, and pedagogy.
4. Effective communication skills, critical and creative thinking abilities, and other skills crucial to reflective decision-making.

5. Knowledge and skills in the use of technology appropriate to the counseling field.
6. Practical abilities to implement the skills, techniques, and strategies associated with student learning and effective leadership.
7. Intellectual, social, ethical, and other personal attributes of reflective decision-makers in professional settings.
8. Commitment to lifelong professional development and general learning.
9. Ability to skillfully accommodate in professional practice diversity of many kinds, including cultural, racial, economic, and that of the exceptional learner, and ability to adapt professionally to developments in the global society.
10. Ability to foster and maintain collaborative efforts with clientele within institutions and in the community, and commitment to active citizenship in the service of a vision of the public good.

Consistent with these general learning outcomes, the knowledge base should include paths to develop the belief systems, cultural world views, personal and ethical awarenesses, and helping skills repertoires necessary to help students grow and enable them to work effectively with a wide diversity of clients and problems, whether in schools or in the community at large. As effective counselors demonstrate high levels of the core conditions of empathy, genuineness, positive regard, and concreteness, these traits should also be reflected in the knowledge base.

Summary

Chapter one of this dissertation included an introduction to the subject, a statement of the problem, the theoretical context and framework, purpose and significance of the study with the research questions, and a definition of the achievement gap as it will be discussed in this study. This chapter acts as a statement of the need and the collection of data portion of the “learner” or program for purposes of the Special Education structure utilized within the study.

Chapter two, which acts as the basis for a suspected disability of the current counselor program and basis or background, provides a review of the literature on school reform movements, students placed at risk, and the relationship of the counselor and the counselor preparation program in relation to this population of students placed at risk. This chapter begins with a discussion of educational reform efforts, acting as the intervention portion of our study, as viewed through the lenses of students placed at risk of school failure, and the counselor preparation program as a conduit to support and teach educators strategies to work with this population of students. The chapter presents a historical perspective of school reform movements, as it is always important to review the background data for any evaluation, and then reviews the research literature and studies related to students placed at risk and the counselor preparation program.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study, and includes the theory and rationale for using survey analysis. This acts as the formal written evaluation from which we will use to evaluate eligibility for Special needs in Chapter

four. Tables and figures used to explain the methodology are presented in this chapter. Chapter IV is a presentation of the data obtained through the survey analysis methodology, which acts as the actual Site-Based Action and Release Committee (SBARC) meeting, sharing the data with the interested stakeholders. Chapter V presents a summary of the study, findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research and exploration, which is the Individual or Counselors' Education Plan for action based on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

You are an agent of change or you are an enabler of the status quo.

-Anonymous

Introduction

This chapter is structured so that it gives the historical evidence, supporting materials to show a need for further evaluation, and the interventions already put into place to address the need as well as suggested future interventions for addressing the need.

As it is the basic job of every educator to instruct all children, we must be able to motivate the students that come from poverty to value an education so that they can break the cycle and better their situation for themselves and, later, their families. But, it is not simply motivation. As mentioned earlier in Chapter one, we must address the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy so that these students can even get to the stage where they can be motivated. It is not enough to just teach these students; we must reach them. In fact, it is the belief of this research that we *must* reach them before we can teach them. Rank (2005) writes in *One Nation, Underprivileged*, "Lasting change must begin with the realization that the status quo of widespread poverty within our borders is unwise, unjust and intolerable" (p. 15). America must stand up against the confines of poverty that

restricts all systems within our country, especially the educational system as this system represents our future. Hence, this chapter begins by examining current school reform efforts as these efforts represent previous attempts and interventions put into place to address the need of reaching all students and, thus, closing the achievement gap. The school reform movement has implications for the population of students placed at risk (SPARS) as the reforms have always been meant to level the playing field for all students with the ominous goal of reducing poverty as a nation.

Historical Evidence/Perspective of School Reform Movements, which Purport to Address the Achievement Gap

The review of the literature begins with a discussion of schools reform and its implications for students placed at risk and consequently the counselor preparation programs put into place to reach these students placed at risk. Darling-Hammond (1997) noted that reforms come in “waves”, each wave promoting a different educational focus. And, as the review will illustrate, these waves have shown only to wash away at the shore of improvement. That is, they continue to hit at the sands of need, but do not create the proper sand castle or structure that would promise progress for those students most in need.

An essay by Deschenes, Cuban and Tyack (2001) offered an historical retrospective of educational reforms in America, how these reforms affected students who have not been able to do what educators wanted them to do, and the labels historically applied to them. This retrospective serves as a framework for the discussion of school reforms. According to these essayists, in the first half of the 19th century,

exposing all children to education emphasized equality of opportunity. This exposure took place in an ungraded, usually rural, one-room schoolhouse where the three R's were taught along with citizenship. The utopian hope for schools of this period was that by exposing poor students to school, they could achieve what the fortunate already possessed. However, children who did not function well in this setting were often labeled "dunce" or "loafer" and might be whipped for their failure to be responsible for their own learning (Deschenes et al. 2001).

In the latter half of the 19th century, reform movements introduced the graded school where all children were taught the same content at the same time, and academic failure was seen as coming from "deficits of character" (Deschenes et al. 2001). Students were labeled "shirker" or "depraved" and were "held back" if they failed to learn. In a similar manner to Deschenes et al. (2001), Darling-Hammond (1997) referred to school during this period as large, impersonal, factory model schools created to teach basic skills to poor children. These schools projected "the image of a moving conveyor belt on which students were placed while teachers performed a predetermined series of operations on them (Darling-Hammond, 1997). This era was when schools adopted the factory model as the basis for the education of children (Gainey, 1993).

Around the early 20th century, a new Progressive reform movement re-emphasized the need for equal opportunity for all students, but introduced testing that placed "differentiated" or "tracked" students into specific curricula or vocational programs. Students were either "normal" or "handicapped", and groups of students, like immigrant or African-American children, were unofficially segregated. This approach

enabled teachers to “teach different things in a different way in a different place”. Labels used during this period included “pupils of low I.Q.”, “slow learner”, or “occupational student” (Deschenes et al. 2001).

Beginning in the 1920’s, group intelligence testing supported the social theory that all children were not born equal and that genetics played a role in a student’s ability to do well in school. Testing in schools tended to isolate students who did not test well (Deschenes et al. 2001). Schools that emphasized repetitive drills and harsh discipline alienated many children and pushed them to choose work over school (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994). As a result, vocational training emerged as imperative for the future of poor children.

By the 1940’s and 1950’s, school focused on fundamentals and rote learning. Not until the Soviet Union challenged America in 1957 by launching Sputnik were curricular reforms aimed at preparing students to think critically initiated by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Deschenes et al. (2001) noted that by the late 1950’s, the civil rights movement forced equal access to education and demands were made to adapt schools to meet the needs of the child, including programs to equalize resources or compensate for past discrimination.

From the 1960’s to the 1970’s, much of early compensatory education continued to be based on a concept of deprivation and cultural deficit (Deschenes et al. 2001). Reformers challenged the use of large-scale intelligence tests that resulted in tracking and asked why minority groups were over represented in classes for students with educational development delays. Such questioning brought attention to the cultural differences of

students and reformers called on federal and state government and local districts to improve schooling for all students including students with special needs (Deschenes et al. 2001). President Johnson increased the federal role in education in 1964 with the passage of *The Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA), which included Headstart and Title I programs, part of his “War on Poverty”. During the 1970’s states also began to rely on minimum competency testing movement to reform schools, ensuring that students would earn at least minimum requirements to be productive citizens (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

In the 1980’s, issues in education reform included educational accountability, lengthening the amount of time students spent in school, and the effects of increased expenditures on educational goals (O’Shea & O’Shea, 1997). During the presidency of Ronald Reagan in 1983, the document, *A Nation at Risk, the Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983), challenged the public school system to provide educational experiences for all students that would prepare them for diverse futures. The National Commission on Education called for more rigorous standards and accountability, along with a return to basics, harder work, more homework, more hours of school, and more days of school (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1993). The report asserted that *every* student has the ability to learn and the desire to acquire knowledge through the educational process.

On its 20th anniversary, Goodlad (2003) noted that the report, although fanned to hysteria by the media, did stimulate a surge of support for innovative improvement initiatives. Cohen and Hill (2001) noted that the publication of *A Nation of Risk* galvanized hundreds of other study groups, commissions, and reports. Within three years, 25 states had enacted comprehensive reforms, which emphasized increased courses

and test taking (Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001). During this time, the back to basics educational reform took predominance and textbooks, lecture-recitation, and an emphasis on rote learning dominated the field (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

The next major reform was *The National Education Goals*, which encouraged schools to work on improving student achievement (*Goals 2000*, 1998). This was passed by the U.S. Congress as the Educate America Act in 1994. *Goals 2000* set benchmarks across all curriculum that was intended to produce graduates who could compete in a global economy through the development of national standards and accountability measures, including testing (Dahir, 2001). This Act included an assumption that by the year 2000 all children in America would start school ready to learn, that the high school graduation rate would increase to at least 90%, and that America's teaching force would have access to programs that would improve its professional skills (*Goals 2000*, 1998).

However, in 2000, under a different administration, *Goals 2000* was retired and the standards based reform movement which produced *The No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), took center stage. This most current bill, set forth by President George W. Bush, was passed in 2002 and amended the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965. As the latest educational reform movement it increased the federal government's participation in the lives of American students by requiring increased student achievement through testing and by setting up a system of rewards and consequences for students and schools that fail to achieve sufficient progress. This legislation called for national accountability within states to show adequate year's progress to 100 percent of

students within the nation's public schools and requires all children in public schools to be on grade level by the year 2014 (No Child Left Behind, 2005).

The Act contained four basic educational reform principals:

- ▶ Stronger Accountability for results,
- ▶ Increased flexibility and local control,
- ▶ Expanded opportunities for parents, and
- ▶ An emphasis on using teaching methods with a record of success.

Accountability was defined, in part, as observable through state standardized testing and reported by school districts to show proficiency in various academic areas. NCLB also mandated annual testing for all students in Reading and Math by 2005-2006, and in Science by 2007-2008.

NCLB addressed prevention and intervention programs for children and youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at risk, and proposed to improve educational programs that prevented these children from dropping out of school (NCLB, 2001). Of key importance were changes to Title I, which required that schools meet annual yearly progress goals. Schools that failed to make their target for two consecutive years would be identified as in need of improvement, opening the door to public school choice (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the first educational reform bill in United States history that has set in place consequences for school districts that do not meet standards in the form of continued accreditation that include loss of funding, outside agency

consultation, and loss of accreditation. (U.S. Dept of Education, 2002) Deschanes and Cuban (2001) stated that the current standards based reforms focus on:

- ▶ Requiring low-performing students to do more during both the school year and the summer,
- ▶ Assessing blame for the failure to achieve academically on the students, and
- ▶ Withholding promotion or graduation as a consequence for failing tests.

Yet, these consequences have not seemed to improve student test scores, which purportedly reflect their learning. The consequences simply shed more light on the demographics of “high performing” schools versus “low performing” schools and provide further support for the necessity of addressing the achievement gap.

Supporting Materials: Analyzing the Reform Movements, which Purport to Address the Achievement Gap

Don't follow the leaders; watch your parking meters. – Bob Dylan

The comparison between current reforms in which all students ideally receive the same curriculum, the 19th century when students were judged on their character or ability, and the era in between when reformers found a different niche or track for every student is striking. It seems as if – for all the talk of reform and change – that education has stood still. In what may seem like an obscure reference in a scholarly paper, Bob Dylan reminds us to watch our parking meters. The message that I get from that is not to stay in any one place too long without analyzing and addressing the situation. While the rhetoric

seems to have analyzed and addressed the educational situation many times over, one has to wonder if the car – as it were – keeps returning to the same spot.

According to Deschenes et al. (2001), the narrow focus of schools today does not allow for the variety of students and for the variety of areas in which they might excel. As a result, students who do not excel in the age-graded, narrowly academic world are once again finding themselves subjected to the same kinds of labeling and failure that their predecessors were.

Based on the political and social winds in the country at the time of each reform's inception, these movements had the capacity to change the lives of public school students. In many instances, these reforms specifically targeted groups of students, or individual students who required additional assistance to function in the education milieu. In many cases, the federal government, state governors and legislatures as well as school boards took over to "set things aright" for educators who they saw as being derelict in their duty (Ericson & Ellet, 2002). In most cases, these reforms created more difficult situations for students who were already in a tenuous position. As Amrein and Berliner (2002) pointed out, because the newest legislation and associated reforms are heavily test based, there could be profound impact on students considered at risk. The State of America's Children, 2004 (Children's Defense Fund, 2004) noted that there are educational policies associated with high rates of school failure, dropout, and delinquency, and that for school reform to work for all children, the needs of students placed at risk, who confront such policies, must be addressed.

Yet, as has been delineated, the job of addressing the needs of students placed at risk and – thus – closing the achievement gap is not getting done. Pedro Portes (2005) acknowledges that the evidence concerning the educational achievement of students placed at risk (SPARS) shows that the 1971 gap in literacy within the content areas of reading, math and science remains the same after decades of efforts to address inequality in education. Portes (2005) goes on to say that “SPAR’s are labeled and assessed below proficient by a school system not itself proficient in educating SPAR’s” (p. 94). This is an important principle given the lack of success in closing the achievement gap by the school system. Portes (2005) goes on to say, “SPAR’s may be as intelligent and competent yet attend classrooms where instruction, content, and class-effects constrain academic progress” (p. 94).

U.S. Surgeon General Satcher’s report on the state of the American educational system, (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999), characterized the public school as failing our nation’s youth. *No Child Left Behind* (2002) also stated that schools are not currently addressing needs of every student to see that they reach measurable academic success in school. So, from the literature, it is a given that students pursuing an education in America’s public schools have exhibited low levels of student achievement and academic performance throughout the history of education within the United States. Empirical data, including low test scores, failing grades, and school drop out rates, indicated that this problem is endemic throughout the country (Dahir, 2001). Reports from the *No Child Left Behind* documents support that a significant percentage of students are performing at levels below set standards of academic achievement and performance (*No Child Left Behind*, 2003).

From the research on reform, it can best be said that reform is still a work in process. One specific restructuring or reorganization has not been found that succinctly corrects the problem of the achievement gap. Yet, there have been pieces of reforms that have shown promise. The next section discusses several practices – put into place in many schools to address the achievement gap – called for by the reforms throughout history and into the current time of NCLB.

Interventions Reflecting the Reform and Addressing the Achievement Gap

This element of the review will examine several of the practices or resources within the schools that have been put into place throughout the reform movements in an attempt to positively effect the achievement of students placed at risk as found within the literature. These practices, as given in the following discussion in respective order, are:

- ▶ Class-Size Reduction
- ▶ After-School Programs
- ▶ Year-Round Schools
- ▶ Programming, such as “Success for All” and “Cooperative Learning”
- ▶ Parent Involvement
- ▶ Improved Leadership

Class-Size Reduction

It is difficult to track national progress in reducing class sizes because no state-by-state "actual" class size information exists. Educators instinctively feel

that smaller class sizes mean higher quality education, but how can this be proven? A better question is how can it be funded even if it is proven?

Data from the neighboring state of Tennessee offers some promising information, especially due to the close proximity which offers some shared populations. Results from the Tennessee Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio) study demonstrate that reducing class sizes in grades K-3 to 13-17 students substantially increases children's reading and mathematics scores. These gains are particularly significant among minority and economically disadvantaged students. The benefits of class-size reduction are seen in kindergarten and through grades 1-3, and the effects are long lasting. Analyses of the STAR results confirm statistically significant differences in achievement among students who attended small classes for one, two, three or four years. Although one year in smaller classes resulted in increased achievement, the benefits of smaller class sizes in the early grades increased as children spent more years in the smaller classes. In addition to initial benefits, there are long lasting effects on student achievement that result from reducing class sizes. Recent findings from Tennessee's Project STAR study demonstrate that students attending small classes in grades K-3 outperformed their counterparts on standardized tests in grades 4, 6 and 8; continued to outperform classmates at the high school level; took more advanced classes; were less likely to be retained a grade or drop out of high school; and were more likely to prepare for college by taking college entrance exams. Additionally, black students who attended smaller classes in the early grades were more likely to take the ACT or SAT, raising their

prospects of attending college and cutting the black-white gap in numbers of students taking college entrance exams in half. However, researchers have found that in order to optimize the carryover benefits of small classes in the early grades through the later grades, it is necessary for students to spend at least three years in small classes. The advantages of attending a small class for the four years encompassing kindergarten through third grade are equivalent to receiving an additional six months to fourteen months of schooling.

Since the introduction of the Tennessee class-size reduction effort in 1985, the original STAR database has been analyzed time and again by numerous and diverse researchers through a variety of approaches, methodological perspectives, and statistical applications. Despite these differences, the findings have been consistent--students who participated in smaller classes in grades K-3 performed at higher levels than their peers in larger classes, and these effects continued through the end of high school. Researchers studying Wisconsin's SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) Program and the CSR Research Consortium's early analysis of the California class-size reduction effort are among those confirming Project STAR results. As in Project STAR, students participating in the SAGE and California class-size reduction programs outperformed their counterparts in larger classrooms on standardized tests.

The Project STAR study was scientifically designed so that the only variable altered was the size of the classes, and was hence able to conclude that smaller class sizes alone do have a positive impact on student achievement. However, to maximize these benefits, effective teaching strategies are needed. Effective teacher research suggests that certain teaching strategies and skills, particularly those that actively engage students in

the learning process, lead to improved student learning when combined with smaller classes.

Among these characteristics of good teaching are:

- the ability to communicate challenging content;
- involving students in hands-on experiences;
- providing clear and immediate feedback; and
- supporting family involvement.

As evidenced in the research base and as seen in existing class-size reduction programs in many states, smaller classes afford more opportunity to implement all of these activities.

The Class-Size Reduction Program recognizes that both class-size reduction and improvements in teacher quality are necessary to achieve the most meaningful, lasting gains in student achievement and to close the achievement gap. Though reducing class size in the early grades can improve instruction, efforts to reduce class size cannot be bought at the expense of placing students in classrooms with unqualified teachers. Even if classrooms are filled with fewer students, we cannot expect that students will achieve to their full potential if they are taught by unqualified teachers or by teachers who do not have professional development opportunities to learn the skills needed to teach to challenging standards. Early research on Project STAR confirms that, when combined with small classes, supporting teachers' knowledge and skills improves student learning and allows teachers to expand time spent focused on academics.

Even though class-size reduction may be a solution, it creates two problems that can seem insurmountable:

1. How to fund the class-size reduction.
2. How to obtain and retain qualified teachers.

After School Programs

The evidence suggests initiatives involving after-school programs for at-risk students are effective in reducing the gap across the country (Posner & Vandell, 1994; 1999). No one knows exactly what works across contexts, why it works, when it works, how long it takes to work, and what the cost/benefit and the long-term gains are. Many well-intentioned efforts go on without longitudinal evaluations, although some address key parts of the problem. Schools alone cannot eradicate cycle of poverty effects that are essentially social and historical in origin. Yet, it is thought that they can educate students placed at risk better when after school programs are in place.

The main variable that after-school initiatives appear to influence is increased time on academic learning through mentoring activities before or after school and motivation through positive models and expectations. Extended learning time initiatives and year-round schools also represent strategic initiatives that appear important in reducing the achievement gap. Some school districts in the nation have extended the number of school days for all students in attempting to meet the new standards. Others have focused their summer programs on students placed at risk, in particular those students who tend to regress during vacation (Portes, 2005).

The primary pitfall to this initiative is that after-school programs must be completed in tandem with parental and community support of academic development in order for it to be successful. Parental support is, in and of itself, a very important component – if not the most important component – of school success. We begin to have the age-old question of the chicken and the egg. It does not seem possible to separate out the after-school initiative from the parental support to say that after-school programs indeed have support of their own merit. It is of common knowledge that the population involved already has difficulty obtaining parental support.

Year Round Schools

2.3-million children in the United States attend year round schools. Some are single-track schools, which mean all the students are on the same schedule. Multi-track schools stagger sessions with the goal of saving money by educating more kids in one building.

Nationwide there are 3,170 year-round schools serving 2.3-million students, according to the National Association for Year-Round Education. That is up from 1,941 schools and 1.4-million students in 1994. Most of them are in California, Hawaii, Arizona, Nevada and Kentucky. The organization considers a modified calendar to be anywhere the summer break is eight weeks or less.

"We feel like 12 to 13 weeks over the summer is excessive," said Sam Pepper, executive director of NAYRE. In addition to helping students retain knowledge, Pepper said, year-round schools allow those who need extra help to get it throughout the school year. "On a traditional nine-month calendar, remediation doesn't occur until summer

school. This way you can turn that student around quicker and limit the achievement gap," he said (Zink, 2004, p.1).

A recent study of year-round schools in 58 school districts nationwide revealed that they may have a slightly positive impact on learning. "It's not a large effect," said Duke University professor Harris Cooper, lead author of the study that appeared in 2003 in the Review of Educational Research. "What we can say is that it clearly doesn't have a negative effect." The study did, however, show that children from disadvantaged homes and those struggling with schoolwork benefited greatly from the modified calendar. (Zink, 2004, p.1)

The research does not show that year-round schools are better for students placed at risk, or – for that matter – research does not fully support year round schools for any student. The best the research can say is that it does not hurt. So, to over-haul the entire educational system on such a report does not seem efficacious.

Success for All

Success for All is the largest of a set of whole-school reform models, all of which focus on changing all aspects of school functioning, from curriculum and instruction to parent involvement, provisions for children experiencing difficulties, and assessment. Success for All, which focuses primarily on reading, provides schools with research-based curriculum materials, instructional strategies, and extensive professional development and follow-up. It provides one-to-one tutoring for young children struggling in reading, as well as active parent involvement programs.

The evidence supports two mechanisms by which Success for All might reduce the achievement gap. First, the clear, powerful, and widely replicated effects of the program imply that if Success for All were disproportionately applied to schools serving students placed at risk, students in these schools would close the gap with other students. Second, there is some evidence suggesting that Success for All may have a differential effect on student achievement, affecting the performance of students placed at risk more than it affects students not placed at risk. Research on Success for All demonstrates that the reading achievement of children in high-poverty Title I schools, is not immutable, but can be changed on a substantial scale. Obviously, quality of implementation and other factors make a difference in the outcomes obtained, but even averaging across better and worse implementation, outcomes are still strong and positive. If programs like Success for All were widely applied to Title I schools, especially to Title I school wide projects (schools in which at least 50% of students qualify for free lunches), it seems likely that the average reading performance of all of America's children would advance, and the gap between students placed at risk and the general population would be significantly smaller than it is today (Slavin & Madden, 2001).

As in the class-size reduction program, quality of implementation and other factors make a difference in the outcomes obtained with Success for All. Hence, even though this program may be a solution, it also creates two problems that can seem insurmountable:

1. How to fund the individual tutoring and practices required by the program, and
2. How to obtain and retain qualified teachers.

Cooperative Learning

Researchers have identified cooperative learning as a successful alternative to ability grouping, and as a method for closing the achievement gap. In the cooperative model, the focus is shifted from teaching to learning, from the individual relationship between teacher and student to the relationship of the student to the class as a community of learners. The teacher is no longer the focus of interaction. Students work in small groups and are interdependent upon each other for answers to their questions and for achieving their goals, with the teacher as facilitator and resource person.

Proponents of cooperative learning feel that the model provides higher academic achievement, increases high level problem solving, promotes better peer relationships and relationships between students and their schools and teachers. Research on cooperative learning at all grade levels consistently finds positive effects of these methods if they incorporate two major elements: group goals and individual accountability. That is, cooperating groups must be rewarded based on the sum or average of individual learning performances (Slavin, 1990).

There is substantial evidence that cooperative learning promotes equity in two significant ways. Slavin and Madden (2001) found that assigning students of different races to work together was consistently related to positive racial attitudes and behaviors. In addition, the academic achievement gap between minority and majority students lessens when cooperative learning is the instructional method. As Slavin points out, all of the cooperative learning models are designed to be true changes in classroom

organization rather than limited treatments. As such, they provide daily opportunities for intense interpersonal contact between students of different races (Slavin, 1981).

In *Cooperative Learning and Desegregation*, Slavin (1981) reports that in three of four studies of cooperative learning, both white and black students in cooperative settings demonstrated higher gains than students in control groups. However, the gains for minority students were far greater in the cooperative learning groups than in the control groups. The result was that minority students significantly narrowed the gap in achievement between themselves and their majority group classmates. Cooperative learning strategies reduce the conflict between peer approval and academic performance that many minority students face (Slavin, 1981).

While some researchers have focused on the academic success of cooperative learning and others have focused on increased group productivity and high quality group interactions, all the methods share the goal of teaching students to help one another learn for the purpose of improving achievement and their relationships with each other as well as the world around them.

While this practice promises to offer successful results, it does not appear to be a program in and of itself. Cooperative learning can be combined with any of the other practices, including improved leadership as discussed below. To separate it out from any other practice does not seem efficient. This researcher chooses to combine it as one of the components for improved leadership.

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement has been touted for years as a very important predictor of student achievement in schools. In recent surveys, teachers focus on the need to increase parental involvement.

The main influence on children's school success remains parental involvement, particularly when it is compatible with schools goals and task demands. Such is associated with:

- a. Modeling positive behaviors, attitudes, and affect related to learning,
- b. Devoting time to reading and related literacy tasks, both individually and in group activities,
- c. Monitoring and rewarding of curiosity and effort,
- d. Showing interest in children's school-related efforts and activity,
- e. Adapting consequences to school related efforts, and
- f. Making school success a priority in the value system of the family (Portes, 2005, pp. 171-172).

Parent involvement cannot be accepted as the panacea of closing the achievement gap. If it were that simple, the gap would not have extended beyond thirty years! Any number of barriers to parental involvement can be identified. Some general barriers include distance between teachers and parents – especially in the case of Jefferson County and bussing for racial balance, race and class barriers, and the public's perception of the school (Moore, 1991).

Some barriers originate at the school level. Confusion about the role of teachers, concerns about territory, doubts about being able to work with at-risk parents and mistaken beliefs about at-risk parents have all been found to be barriers for schools and

teachers. Other barriers include low teacher expectations for at-risk children, schools assuming a passive role, schools not helping parents feel welcome and communications between parents and the school that focus on the negative (Liontos, 1992).

But, the most challenging barriers originate at the home level and have been artificially constructed by parents due to their personal historical interactions with the school. Feelings of inadequacy, failure, poor self-worth, suspicion or anger at the school can create such barriers. Some parents have a "leave it to the school" attitude; others have logistical problems; and some have economic, emotional or time constraints to handle (Liontos, 1992).

While appropriate, effective parent involvement can improve student achievement, it cannot be assumed that simple parent involvement will close the achievement gap. As Pedro Portes (2005) states, "the assumption that schools, parent involvement programs, or family literacy programs can overcome or compensate for class-related differences is erroneous. While schools organize teaching and learning in ways that do not compensate for lack of parental academic supports, there is little evidence that current strategies to promote parent involvement close the gap" (p. 172).

Improved Leadership

The data from McREL's balanced leadership framework (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003) demonstrates that there is, in fact, a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement. They found that the average effect size, expressed as a correlation, between leadership and student achievement is 0.25. To explain this,

consider two schools – school A and School B – with similar student and teacher populations. Both demonstrate achievement on a standardized, norm-referenced test at the 50th percentile. Leaders in school A are average. That is, their abilities in the leadership responsibilities are ranked at the 50th percentile. Leaders in school B demonstrate abilities in the leadership responsibilities at an increase of exactly one standard deviation above school A. McRel’s research findings indicate that this increase in leadership ability would translate into mean student achievement at school B that is 10 percentile points higher than school A. Expressed differently, a one standard deviation improvement in leadership practices is associated with an increase in average student achievement from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile. This represents a statistically significant difference in achievement.

There is much to be learned about who provides such leadership. Neither superintendents nor principals can carry out the leadership role by themselves. Highly successful leaders develop and count on leadership contributions from many others in their organizations. Principals typically count on key teachers for such leadership, along with their local administrative colleagues (Hord, Steigelbauer and Hall, 1984) Literature suggests that collaboration between professionals among school and the community is both an integral component in addressing the needs of our nation’s children and youth and effecting improvement in the academic achievement of our nation’s youth. The act of collaboration should be driven by the possibility of aiding students in reaching increased levels of school success (Perry, 1995; Rowley, 2000; Epstein & Sanders, 1998; Stone & Clark, 2001).

Leadership is widely regarded as a key factor in accounting for differences in the success with which schools foster the learning of their students. The contribution of effective leadership is largest when it is needed most; there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of intervention by talented leaders. While other factors within the school also contribute to such turnarounds, leadership is the catalyst (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Summary

While most of these practices seemed to promise some level of positive movement, the evaluation of each places large obstacles in the way of any one of these being the panacea or answer to the problem of closing the achievement gap or reaching those students creating the achievement gap. The basic core is that these practices still only address the surface problem of improving the academic structure or closing the achievement gap. A true answer to any problem seeks to address the core or root of the dilemma or complexity. In this instance, the core was discussed earlier in Chapter One: Infusing social and emotional skills into the learning. Schools must address the basic divides of physiological, needs, safety, love and belonging according to Maslow or survival and connecting/belonging/love according to Glasser before we can even begin to think of addressing the academic needs. We must first address the underlying needs of social and emotional skills so that students can be motivated to want to learn.

One can say that both the reform and practices within the reform focus the primary resource on improving the labor force within the school, and specifically improving the leadership within the school. Consequently, as most of the literature

focuses much of the attention on the preparation of the educators, this research concentrates the attention in that direction as well. This research will center on preparing the support leader of the school, the counselor, to support the academic achievement of both the student and the teaching staff.

Historical Evidence/Role of the School Counselor and the Comprehensive Program

It has been hypothesized and somewhat proven by Shriver and Weissberg (2005) that promoting students' social and emotional skills causes students to rank at least ten percentile points higher on achievement tests. Consequently, this section will discuss the historical role of the person traditionally assigned to address students' social and emotional skills – the school counselor – and the related comprehensive programs that address these needs.

School counseling has continually evolved since its early roots in the late 1800's. Jesse B. Davis started the first documented guidance program in 1889 in a Detroit public school. His program included vocational education to prepare students for careers. The next guidance programs in schools developed in the 1900's, and were implemented by early pioneers focusing upon areas of vocational training and advisement. The programs stemmed from the development of humanistic approaches to child psychology and education. Early pioneers focused on aiding students in finding their roles in the workplace.

The "Father of Guidance," Frank Parson, developed the Vocational Bureau of Boston in 1909. The bureau was concerned about matching students

with job interests and abilities and preparing them for the workforce (Myrick, 2003; Baker, 1996).

The guidance movement grew in the 1920's as personality tests began to be used for the measurement of traits that helped match individuals with sectors of the workforce. Personality tests became a common assessment tool used in schools, industry, and the military (Myrick, 2003; Baker, 1996). During the 1920's, John Dewey introduced progressive education (Baker, 1996). This approach emphasized the idea of counseling as opposed to guidance. Progressive education focuses upon the school's responsibility to modify the student's environment and develop the "total" child in areas encompassing moral, personal, and social development.

By the 1930's, the first counseling theories emerged. E. G. Williamson formed the directive, counselor-centered approach. The counselor-centered approach identifies the counselor as the primary resource in matching students' personality traits to vocational options. This approach embraces the idea that the counselor possesses the expertise and knowledge to direct students to career options in conjunction with the administering of personality tests and assessment tools (Coy, 1999).

During World War II, the use of tests, inventories, and psychological counseling experienced widespread use in the military. Later, schools adopted the use of these tools. As a matter of reference, the military still works very closely with high school counselors in administering the ASFAB inventory for career

exploration. The next major change in guidance occurred in 1949, as Mathewson postulated that the need for a specific developmentally appropriate guidance process occurs in an individual in a developmental sequence through the age of maturity. This idea directed guidance to focus upon the developmental needs of the individual (Coy, 1999).

The next major change came with the launching of Sputnik in 1957 and the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. The two events led to the training of school counselors becoming a priority in order to provide guidance for students in the exploration of careers. States began developing and implementing certification standards within the 1950's in order to have a uniform curriculum for counselor training. The first certification standards were implemented in Ohio on January 1, 1955 (Myrick, 1997; Baker, 1996).

Social trends in the 1960's brought about social change, which led school counseling to focus even more on the development of the individual. Client-centered approaches such as that of Carl Rogers emerged and were based on the humanistic principle of unconditional positive regard (Corey, 1996).

Along with the social changes of the 1960's came consequences for the following decade. The demand for guidance programs increased as societal issues such as teenage pregnancy, drop-outs, drug addiction, and alcoholism became prevalent. To begin addressing these issues, Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) introduced the idea of developmental counseling and guidance as services that would be available for all children.

Social issues continued to be important in the 1980's. Guidance and counseling programs continued to evolve in order to effectively serve student populations in the public schools. Organizations such as the American School Counselor Association and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs would then be urged by the public to develop unified standards and curricula for program implementation and training of school counseling professional (Dahir, 2001).

In response to the school reform focus of the 1990's, developmental school counseling programs adopted national standards set by the American School Counselor Association (Dahir, 2001). This professional organization developed a National Model for School Counseling Program that recommends the majority of the school counselor's time be spent in direct contact with *all* students so that each receives the program's benefits (ASCA, 2005). This will be discussed in more detail in the potential – or current – role of the counselor in the next section.

Supporting Materials: Analyzing the Role of the School Counselor and the Comprehensive Program

A lack of standards for students and teachers, coupled with schools that are organized for 19th century learning leaves educators without an adequate foundation for constructing good teaching. Under these conditions, excellence is hard to achieve. The history of the counseling profession seems to have left the schools with an identity crisis for the counselor. The target keeps moving. Or, worse, in some schools and districts, there has still yet to be an established target. Paisley and McMahon (2001) asserts that

“school counseling programs and their particular areas of emphases have alternated based on social, political, economic, and psychological issues facing schools, communities, families, children, and adolescents. At times, school counselors have worked more exclusively in educational and career arenas while at other times, much more attention has been paid to the personal and social development of students.” (p. 1)

Education Trust’s (2001) evaluation – in basic terms – says that current counseling programs are reactive rather than proactive. This causes the counselor’s time to be eaten away with a small percentage of the school population. With a proactive, prevention model, the counselor’s time is more efficiently spent.

House and Hayes (2002), on behalf of The Education Trust, argue that school counselors must work to be proactive leaders who are effective collaborators in advocating for the academic success of all students. This means that school counselors’ primary focus should be to close the achievement gap between poor students and students of color, known throughout this study as Students Placed at Risk or SPARS, and their more advantaged peers. House and Hayes outline a “New Vision” for school counselors, moving from a present focus as mental health providers to a focus on academic student achievement, very closely resembling the ASCA model. The Role changes necessary to address these concepts are given in Table 2.1.

Three areas of role change outlined by the Education Trust have particular

Table 2.1 School Counselor Role Change (Portes, 2005, p. 219)

Traditional Guidance Curriculum	Transformed School Counseling
Class scheduling	Group Interventions
Developing academic year plans	Prevention of risk behaviors
Promotion/retention criteria	Promotion of parent education
Tests and Testing	Teen pregnancy and its consequences
Registration, college and high school graduation	Violence and Bullying
Bureaucratic paperwork	Suicide and Depression
Crisis Intervention	Prejudice and hate reduction
Referrals	Abusive relationships
Parent contacts	Eating disorders, health
Individual counseling	School failure – economics education
Drug education	Divorce adjustment
Exceptional child compliance	Study skills
Guardians of the status quo	Decision-making
	Use of data leadership
	Leadership
	Test-taking skills development
← Vocational guidance →	

relevance for changing the professional identity of school counselors. The first has to do with the shift away from the desire of schools counselors to be identified as mental health or human development specialists in favor of a role focused on supporting the academic success of students. While this may seem semantic in nature in light of the school counselor acting as school support, it is important to note that improving social and emotional skills has a great impact on academic achievement. Hence, the counselor has an important effect on the academic success of students when seen in this light. The second area centers on a shift away from seeing the individual student as the unit of intervention to focusing on change in the school, as a whole, in order to promote the achievement of all students. This movement focuses on prevention and is proactive

rather than reactive. Finally, focusing the school counselor role on leadership, advocacy, and serving as a change agent is critical given the well documented conflict between school counselor preparation and the realities of the work environment (Brott & Myers, 1999).

As discussed earlier, someone needs to make the target visible to all within the school and ensure that the target remains consistent and still. As the support person within the school, it seems natural that this role would fall to the counselor to provide the foundation from which the principal builds the curriculum and evaluates the teachers. Hence, the counselor needs to be prepared to do so.

Portes (2005) argues that a comprehensive, multilevel plan to eradicate the educational achievement gap must include changes in higher education. That is, one way to accomplish this challenging task of closing the achievement gap is to view higher education as that link in the socialization process that not only prepares educators but also future policy makers from a variety of other disciplines. Not only must we prepare future educational leaders to work collaboratively in K – 12 schools to move achievement with a focus on the major stakeholders – principals, teachers, and counselors, but we must also include in undergraduate education sufficient exposure to other majors about human development, learning, culture with respect to the achievement gap, current and proposed solutions and models. Educators, in particular, need to have a common knowledge base in area, including how to improve current practices through leadership, know-how, and collaboration.

So, it seems – from the literature – that the change factor is not a what, as in reform or practice, but a who, as in a leader to lead the charge. “For the first time in history, schools are being held accountable for the achievement of all groups of students,” said Kati Haycock, Director of the Education Trust. “School counselors are ideally positioned to serve as advocates for students and create opportunities for all students to reach these new high academic goals” (Ed. Trust, Transforming, p.#2).

A recent school initiative, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), included the requirements for more rigorous and universal educational standards and increased methods of assessment (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Because students placed at risk are affected by the emphasis on testing and accountability, the need for well-prepared educators to work with these students necessitated more appropriate counselor preparation programs. NCLB emphasized the hiring, training, and retaining of qualified personnel for every student who has the potential to be left behind, including those at risk from environmental factors and those who engage in risky behaviors. Preparing the administrator who best supports the staff in meeting the needs of the students placed at risk is one method of meeting the needs of educators who work with this student population.

“The research couldn’t be more clear, compelling and consistent. Students need highly qualified teachers and a high level of curriculum to be successful in the world of work *and* postsecondary education,” said Stephanie Robinson, Principal Partner with the Education Trust. “School counselors are in a unique

position to make sure that all students have access to these resources.” (Ed. Trust, Transforming, p.2)

Decades of scientifically based research show that the services of School Counselors have a positive effect on children (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gerler, 1985; St. Clair, 1989; Whitson & Sexton, 1998). Research meta-analyses also substantiate the beneficial effects of school counseling programs (Baker, Swisher, Nadenicheck& Popwicz, 1984; Prout, 1986, Sprinthall, 1981).

The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs is the roadmap which the School Counselor follows in relation to the School Improvement Process. One component of both processes – the ASCA model and School Improvement – is intentional, focused work aimed at closing the achievement gap. Implementing a comprehensive school-counseling program is consistently associated with students having better relationships with their teachers, being more satisfied with the quality of education available to them, and earning higher grades (Lapan, Gysbers & Petroski, 2001).

Not only does the School Counselor endeavor to build a caring relationship with every student, but they also serve as a change agent working with the Student Improvement Process team to identify systemic barriers to all students having equal access to a rigorous curriculum. Research supports positive effects of counselor-led interventions on students educational choices (Peterson, Long & Billups, 1999).

Research shows students who have access to counseling programs report being more positive and having a greater feeling of belonging and safety in their schools (Lapan, Gysbers & Sun, 1997). Other studies show that elementary guidance activities have a positive influence on elementary students' academic achievement (Hadley, 1988; Lee, 1993). A major study by the U.S. Department of Education found that counseling services were one of the key elements of reducing rates of school dropout (Kaufman, Bradbury & Owens, 1992). Additionally, counseling decreases classroom disturbances (Lapan et al, 1997) and increases on-task productive behavior of students (Mullis & Otwell, 1997; Watts & Thomas, 1997).

In light of the position of counselors in implementing this change, the next sections will review the development of the school counselor program along with the development of the role of the school counselor.

Suggested Interventions addressing the Need for a New/Potential Role of the School Counselor and Comprehensive Program

This section presents the role model for the current school counseling programs and, thus, serves as the “commensurate peer” to which the counseling programs of today are being measured. That is, this sets the baseline for which to measure whether the current school counseling programs and, further, the counseling preparation programs need to be measured as to whether they are eligible for a specialized plan in order to reach these goals.

The National Model of School Counseling Programs published by ASCA (2003) states that school counselors serve as leaders, advocates, and collaborators focusing upon system wide change to ensure success of students by closing the achievement gap when found among students. ASCA stated that the purposes of national standards are to:

- (1) help school systems identify what students will be able to do as a result of participating in a school counseling program,
- (2) establish similar goals expectations, support systems, and experiences for all students,
- (3) serve as an organizational tool to identify and prioritize the elements of an effective school counseling program, and
- (4) provide an opportunity to discuss the role of school counseling programs in school to enhance student learning.

ASCA further stated that collaboration focuses on a team approach for planning and implementing strategies to help students with issues or problems that may inhibit academic performance and the learning process (ASCA, 2005; Baker, 1996). The counselor is also one of the primary collaborators in initiating this change within the schools. That change must include proper training so that counselors can partner with the principal to take on the requirements of closing the achievement gap. It is up to the colleges and universities to prepare these counselors.

The National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2005)

suggests that in addressing the achievement gap, schools are being challenged to demonstrate adequate progress for every student and are no longer being judged by their top percentages of students in the domain of academic performance. This challenge is also reflected in the legislation, *No Child Left Behind* – discussed earlier – which requires that each school show adequate yearly progress (US Dept. of Ed., 2002).

According to the National Standards, school counselors must function in a variety of roles to support the personal/social development of students and thus the academic and career development. School counselors are expected to engage in the transformed roles of:

- Individual counseling,
- Group counseling,
- Consultation,
- School-wide guidance activities,
- Case management, and
- Program evaluation.

Therefore, it is imperative for counselor educators to adequately prepare school counseling students to meet their future job requirements. This idea is supported throughout much of the literature.

- “A comprehensive, multi-level plan to eradicate the educational achievement gap must include changes in higher education ... Higher education requires transformation in the ways it prepares all professional educators and the extent to which it commits itself to promote excellence through equity in the public school system.” (Portes, 2005, p.321)
- Improving student achievement is not the job of K – 12 alone. Our colleges and universities also have a major role to play in helping all students succeed in both sectors. (Ed. Trust, 2001)

In order to assist counselor educators in adequately preparing school counseling students to meet their future job requirements, we have further expanded the earlier table delineating the transformed counselor roles. The role groups would fall into categories of preparation as represented in Table 2.2.

Supporting Materials: Analyzing the Potential Counselor Preparation Program

Paisley and Hayes (2003) provide a renewed vision for school counseling, when they say, “accepting the challenge to raise the educational attainment of every student to enable full citizenship participation presents a significant role shift for today’s school counselor. It means moving from service provider to program and student advocate, from promoting individual adjustment and control to fostering social emancipation and personal empowerment. Today’s school counselor is envisioned to be a school leader who advocates for the academic,

Table 2.2 Role Groups addressing Transformed School Counselor Roles

Traditional Guidance Curriculum	Transformed School Counseling	Role “Group” addressing Transformed Roles
Class scheduling	Group Interventions	Group Counseling
Developing academic year plans	Prevention of risk behaviors	School-wide guidance activities*
Promotion/retention criteria	Promotion of parent education	Consultation
Tests and Testing	Teen pregnancy and its consequences	School-wide guidance activities*
Registration, college and high school graduation	Violence and Bullying	School-wide guidance activities*
Bureaucratic paperwork	Suicide and Depression	Group Counseling*
Crisis Intervention	Prejudice and hate reduction	School-wide guidance activities
Referrals	Abusive relationships	Group Counseling*
Parent contacts	Eating disorders, health	School-wide guidance activities/Group Counseling*
Individual counseling	School failure – economics education	School-wide guidance activities/Group Counseling*
Drug education	Divorce adjustment	Group Counseling*
Exceptional child compliance	Study skills	School-wide guidance activities/Group Counseling
Guardians of the status quo	Decision-making	School-wide guidance activities
	Use of data leadership	Program evaluation
	Leadership	Case Management
	Test-taking skills development	School-wide guidance activities
← Vocational guidance →		School-wide guidance activities*

**Individual counseling based on individual need and intensity of student concern*

career, social, and personal success of every student. In so doing, the new vision school counselor demonstrates a fundamental belief in the capacity of all students to achieve at high levels on rigorous and challenging academic course content

when provided with the necessary encouragement and supports to ensure their success” (p. 3). Providing that necessary encouragement and support is paramount to student success, especially at the younger grades. Jalongo (2007) supports this assertion by stating, “feelings may assume even greater importance for young learners who, based on their limited experience, can become discouraged easily, decide that they simply are not ‘good at’ something, or overgeneralize to conclude that they are ‘not very smart’ (p. 397). This is the beginning of the self-fulfilling that SPAR’s adopt. When anyone believes they can achieve, then they will fulfill that belief. The counselor’s encouragement and support to remove these barriers early and throughout the educational experience is fundamental to student achievement.

Darling-Hammond (1997) gave a detailed recommendation for reinventing teacher preparation to address this idea that all students can achieve, which serves as a good blueprint or framework for reinventing the counselor preparation. The steps that she recommended, through the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future report were:

- Organize teacher education around standards for students and teachers;
- Institute extended, graduate-level teacher preparation programs that provide yearlong internships in a professional development school;
- Create and fund mentoring programs for beginning teachers, along with evaluation of teaching skills;

- Create stable, high-quality sources of professional development – and then allocate 1% of state and local spending to support them, along with additional matching funds to schools districts;
- Organize new sources of professional development, such as teacher academics, school/university partnerships, and learning networks that transcend school boundaries; and
- Make professional development an ongoing part of teachers’ daily work.

If counselors are to be ready to help teachers help students, then counselor preparation programs must consciously examine the expectations embodied in new curriculum frameworks and assessments and understand what they imply for counseling and the counselor education programs. Then, they must develop effective strategies for preparing counselors to lead the charge in closing the achievement gap.

Tweaking the blue-print a bit to make it more “counselor-friendly”, the steps include:

- Organize counselor preparation around the role groups developed through the ASCA standards, which already organize around achievement for students in the areas of:
 - Individual counseling,
 - Group counseling,
 - Consultation,
 - School-wide guidance activities,

- Case management, and
- Program evaluation;
- Institute yearlong internships within the graduate-level counselor preparation program;
- Create and fund mentoring programs for beginning counselors, along with an evaluation of counseling skills based on the standards;
- Create stable, high-quality sources of professional development for counselors alongside the teacher professional development – and then utilize the 1% allocation to support both counselors and teachers along with additional matching funds to schools districts;
- Organize new sources of professional development, such as counselor academies, school/university partnerships, and learning networks that transcend school boundaries; and
- Make professional development an ongoing part of counselor's daily work.

Conclusion

Although research exists on students placed at risk and on counselor preparation programs, a new inquiry into the relationship of the two with regard to this particular group of students is needed. A new vision for school counselors, contrary to some interpretations, does not represent an abandonment of concern for the personal and social development of children and adolescents; instead, it reflects the requirement that school counselors link interventions to the mission

and purposes of school while holding themselves accountable for their contributions to student outcomes (Paisley & Hayes, 2003).

School counselors are being encouraged to serve as mentors, personal support systems, and advocates for disadvantaged and minority students within the educational setting. Additionally, it has been suggested that in order to best serve these students' needs, school counselors need to play a key role in school reform efforts (House & Hayes, 2002). The challenge for our profession is to integrate this new vision into existing school counseling programs.

This challenge has students in school counselor preparation programs in the process of identity formation. As such, they rely heavily on the professional literature and the materials in the coursework for skill development and identity formation. Paisley and McMahon (2001) delineates this identity formation by saying that the calls for reexamination of both school counseling preparation and practice have ranged in motivation from the need for an active response to educational reform to concern for the neglected, yet extensive, needs of at-risk students.” Paisley and McMahon (2001) further goes onto explain this by saying, “Attending to all demands for time and programming can place counselors in the unrealistic position of trying to be all things to all people.” And, finally, Paisley and McMahon (2001) give a list of the demands, in saying, “Combining appropriate program and role, school counselors are asked to:

1. Provide individual and small groups counseling sessions
2. Conduct classroom guidance interventions
3. Consult with parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives

4. Advocate for all students to enhance educational experiences and outcomes
5. Build partnerships and teams within and outside of the school
6. Be a member of school leadership and policy-making groups
7. Provide individualized, focused, and intensive interventions for at-risk students
8. Be the developmental specialist in the school setting
9. Be the mental health specialist in the school setting
10. Provide family counseling interventions
11. Coordinate school-wide programs including peer helping, peer mediation, conflict resolution, violence prevention, character education, and teacher advisory programs
12. Prevent suicides, pregnancies, dropouts, drug use, and general moral decay
13. Maintain the necessary levels of expertise in all of the above areas to ensure quality in all interventions and programs.” (p. 1)

Paisley & McMahon (2001) argues that counselors, even with the most ideal counselor-to-student ratio, would have difficulty fulfilling all of these expectations. They state that “asking school counselors facing such student loads to perform the full range of associate and appropriate functions may be beyond the scope of what is possible. When these tasks are also layered with often-assigned yet professionally inappropriate roles, the ability to design and implement effective is even less likely.” (Paisely & McMahon, p.2) It seems that the counselor is almost set up to present a less than effective program and find their job replaced by other professionals. Yet, in this era where school counselors are struggling to maintain their uniqueness while finding their jobs being replaced by other professionals, it is even more imperative that we clearly define ourselves as distinctive from other professionals within the school system and that we are committed to the academic success of all students.

Paisley & McMahon do not present the problem without also offering hope. In their 2001 article, it states, “by meeting the challenges, the school counseling profession has an opportunity to ensure that school counselors obtain the skills necessary to meet the changing needs of students, develop stronger professional identities, implement more appropriate school programs, and become more accountable for their programs. Individual school counselors and the profession at large will need to face the challenges with confidence, optimism, commitment, and creativity in order to ensure school counselors continue to feel productive in their careers and to ensure that students develop the skills and acquire the knowledge they need to succeed in school and in life.” (Paisley & McMahon, p.5)

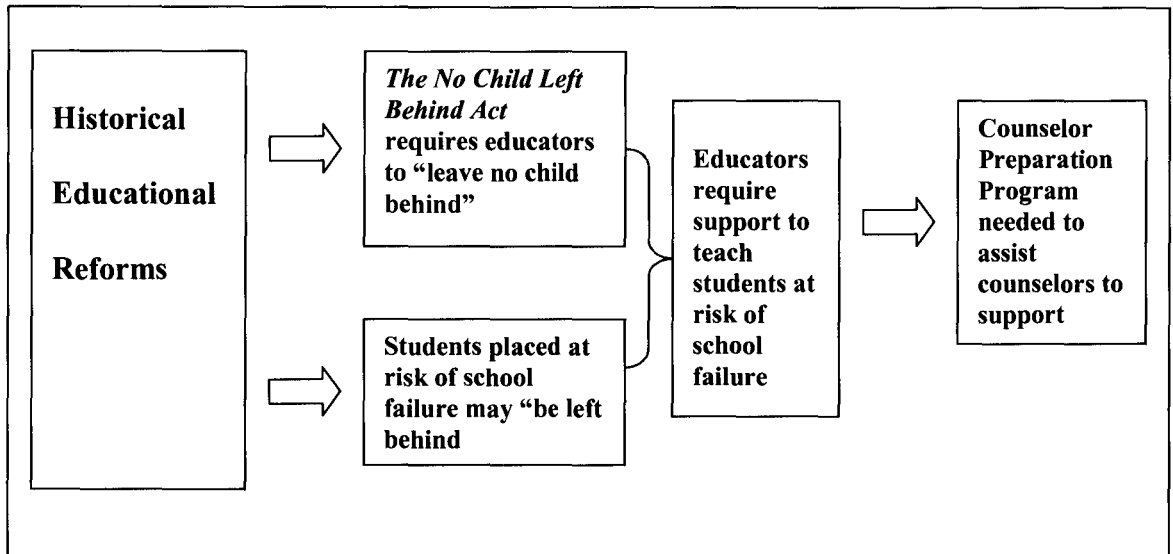
Counselor preparation programs play a critical role in preparing prospective and practicing school counselors for the rigorous demands and needs in today’s schools (EdTrust, 2003) and defining the profession. If prospective counselors are to play a relevant role in the achievement of their students, graduate programs must commit to teach school counseling graduate students how to engage in leadership and advocacy practices that support social and emotional skills and, thus, close achievement gaps. These efforts are focused on preparing school counselors to use these skills to effect systemic change that removes barriers that impede student achievement.

The model presented in Figure 2.2 illustrates the impact of educational reforms on students placed at risk of school failure, and the necessity of preparing the counselor to

administrate the appropriate curriculum and culture to work with this body of students.

This model was used to develop the research questions that guided this study.

Figure 2.1 Educational reforms impacting students placed at risk of school failure and supporting the need for a more current Counselor Preparation Program



An understanding of the appropriate content within the counselor preparation program would contribute to identifying areas of possible development for the university programs in order to assist both the counselors and the staff with which they work in understanding students placed at risk of school failure. Information gathered through this research could inform university personnel about the necessary courses required within the new program. Also, information gained is useful in analyzing if current practices match perceived needs of counselors and educators, or if the increased emphasis on accountability and testing has subsumed other areas of need for educators. The method used to obtain the information required to answer these questions is found in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

People become really quite remarkable when they start thinking they can do things. When they believe in themselves, they have the first secret of success.

- Norman Vincent Peale

Introduction

To investigate and analyze the current counseling preparation programs within higher education in relation to counselor's knowledge and ability to assist in closing the achievement gap, this study included both quantitative and descriptive research methods. The descriptive research design is cross-sectional. A survey was used for evaluation, information gathering and answering specific research questions about the perceptions and opinions of practicing counselors regarding their own counselor preparation programs. Two basic research questions developed in this study were as follows:

- 1.) Does the program content in current counselor preparation programs satisfy the knowledge base needed for professional competency in relation to closing the achievement and supporting students placed at risk? That is, do the current counselors in today's schools feel that their preparation program prepared them for the demands of the counselor position they now hold in relation to promoting students' social and emotional skills so that their academic performance

improves – especially those students that fall into the SPARS category?

- 2.) What are the best courses to offer in counselor preparation programs so that counselors are better prepared to promote students' social and emotional skills in order to improve their academic achievement?

Research Design

Purpose/Rationale

The purpose of this study was to explore the knowledge and attitudes of practicing counselors regarding their counselor preparation programs in relation to being able to address the needs of students placed at risk. The study also probed for the reasons professional counselors felt they needed such preparation. Creswell (1994) pointed to several advantages for using the survey method including the expedient turn around time for data collection, low cost to implement the study, and the ability to identify attributes of population from a small group of individuals, the survey method was used to probe for these reasons. The fundamental principle within the study is that, in order to address group based differences in of student achievement, counseling programs should focus on student support in terms of meeting both cultural as well as academic factors in terms of providing the learning environment and teaching necessary for *all* to succeed.

Study Design

In order to address counselor preparation, this study will:

- Survey the opinions of counselors on their preparation to address both an academic program to meet the needs of all students as well as the emotional needs of all students;
- Survey the opinions of counselors on the existing classes in the coursework in relation to preparation for the job currently at hand;
- Gather the data that measures the opinions on the existing classes as well as the proposed classes; and
- Report the findings.

Sample

The study used a select sample of school counselors in levels K – 12 (elementary, middle, and high school). A single-staged sample of school counselors from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, within several school districts, was utilized. The researcher distributed surveys to each counselor within all three levels – elementary, middle, and high – through e-mail. The researcher assured the participants that the study would be based on non-usage of names of districts and employees on the survey instrument and results in order to better ensure and secure the honesty of responses and, thus, the reliability and validity of the study.

Approximately 1,271 school counselors were given the survey instrument by the researcher through e-mail addressed to each participant. For the pilot study, a smaller group of representative counselors from Jefferson County was used as a focus group.

Measures

The survey instrument, given in appendix A, was developed by examining previous surveys designed within the realms of school reform, closing the achievement gap, and counselor preparation. The researcher gained insight into these surveys through the literature review as well as informal interviews with practicing Counselors Educators at the University of Louisville. The program's description as presented in the *University of Louisville Graduate Catalog* was also used in order to construct items which would determine if students' perceptions of their current preparation program in relation to coursework prepared them for supporting students placed at risk. The surveys were drafted and submitted to program faculty for final changes and comments.

Section I of the survey asked about demographic data in order to obtain similarities and differences among the participants. Section II asked closed-ended questions using a likert-like scale to gauge the level of impact that counselors felt specific factors or causes had on closing the achievement gap. Section III also asked closed-ended questions using a likert-like scale to gather information regarding the participant's knowledge base. Section IV asked closed-ended questions utilizing a likert-like scale to extract information about participants' content knowledge regarding the gap. Section V also asked closed-ended questions utilizing a likert-like scale to extract information about participants' content knowledge regarding counseling. Section VI asked closed-ended questions utilizing a likert-like scale to gain information relative to counselors' education and training. Section VII asked closed-ended questions utilizing a likert-like scale to gather information in relation to participants' dispositions and attitudes regarding programs and practices and their effects on closing the achievement gap as perceived by

school counselors and counselor educators. Section VIII asked closed-ended questions utilizing a likert-like scale to gain information relative to participants' skills and experience related to closing the achievement gap. Section IX closed the survey asking participants to comment on their counselor preparation program's strengths and weaknesses, as well as make suggestions for improvement. Frequency tables were conducted and means computed for all Likert scale items.

Data Collection Procedures

The population surveyed included counselors from in and around the surrounding counties/districts of Louisville. The counselors' names were retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education's mailing labels. Then, utilizing the global network on the state's e-mail database, the surveys were sent to 1,271 of the state's counselors. Survey packets were e-mailed to counselors asking that they be completed and returned within two weeks. Each e-mail included:

- A cover letter explaining the survey,
- An attached survey, and
- Instructions for returning the survey.

At the end of two weeks, reminder e-mails were mailed to the respondents that had not already submitted the survey. After another two weeks, e-mails with the attached survey were again sent to those that had not returned them as of yet requesting once more that they be returned within two weeks. After yet another two weeks, reminder e-mails were sent again. At the final six week period, thank you e-mails were sent to all respondents –

including those who had not returned in an attempt to utilize guilt as a final motivating factor.

The final response rate was 788 returned surveys, which resulted in a 62% response rate. According to Babbie (1990), a 60 percent and above return rate of surveys is very good.

Data Analysis

The survey information was tabulated and analyzed with respect to the evaluative research questions. An analysis of survey items is presented along with the relevant data, computerized frequencies and descriptive data for all survey items throughout the tables within the text of Chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will respond to the research questions put forth by this dissertation study. A survey was used to explore the knowledge and attitudes of practicing counselors regarding their counselor preparation programs in relation to being able to address the needs of students placed at risk. The study also probed for the reasons professional counselors felt they needed such preparation. The study further examined the knowledge base that schools counselors have in relation to the school setting, population and other factors involved with the achievement gap.

A quantitative and descriptive survey analysis was used to conduct the research. A description of the sample is presented followed by an explanation of the resultant sample along with an analysis of the survey data.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The population for the present study was made up of school counselors from elementary, middle, and high schools within the state of Kentucky. Approximately 1,271 school counselors were given the survey instrument by the researcher through e-mail correspondence. 788 counselors completed the survey. 89.8 percent (n=708) of the

returned surveys were completed by females and 10.2 percent (n=80) by males. This is representative of the female/male ratio of school counselors within the represented districts.

Resultant Sample

The ethnicity of the school counselors was quantified using survey responses. Of the 788 counselors who responded to the survey, 93.8 percent (n = 739) identified themselves as Caucasian or European American. 3.8 percent (n = 30) identified themselves as African American, while 1.3 percent (n = 10) identified themselves as Native American. The remaining 1.1 percent (n = 9) identified themselves as Asian American. The areas of Hispanic and other, which were also listed on as choices on the survey, were not represented among the respondents.

The professional experience of the school counselors was also quantified using survey responses. 34.6 percent (n = 273) of the respondents worked as high school counselors. 44.3 percent (n = 349) of the respondents worked as elementary school counselors and 21.1 percent (n = 166) worked as middle school counselors. 13.5 percent (n = 107) of the sample had served as a school counselor for 0 – 5 year, 44.4 percent (n = 350) of the school counselors had 5 – 10 years of experience, 22.1 percent (n = 174) had 10 – 15 years experience, 12.3 percent (n = 97) had 15 – 20 years experience and 7.6 percent (n = 60) possessed more than 20 years of experience.

Descriptive Statistics

The respondents were mostly white (93.8%) and female (89.8%), which is consistent with national data (National Education Association, 1997) indicating that most

teachers in the United States are white (91%) and female (74%). The respondents reported experience levels that ranged from 0 to more than 20 years within band ranges of 5 years, yielding a mean of 2.56, which reflects the mid range within the bands of 10 – 15 years and 10 – 20 years. Using this mean, it can be said that the approximate average for these counselors falls at 15 years.

None of the respondents reported having only a bachelors degree, which is reasonable as the Counseling position requires a Masters. 82.6 percent (n = 651) held a masters degree, 14.8 percent (n = 117) had a Rank I, and 2.5 percent (n = 20) had earned a Doctorate degree. Descriptive data for the actual survey respondents appear in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Respondents

Variable	N	%	Mean	SD
Gender			1.8985	.30221
Female (2)	708	89.8		
Male (1)	80	10.2		
Ethnicity			4.8109	.79773
African American (1)	30	3.8		
Asian American (4)	9	1.1		
European American (5)	739	93.8		
Hispanic (2)	0	0		
Native American (3)	10	1.3		
Other (6)	0	0		
School Level			1.9036	.88376
Elementary (1)	349	44.3		
Middle (2)	166	21.1		
Secondary (3)	273	34.6		
Level of Education			2.1992	.45888
Bachelors (1)	0	0		
Masters (2)	651	82.6		
Educational Specialist (3)	117	14.8		
Doctorate (4)	20	2.5		
Years of Experience			2.5596	1.10572
0 – 5 (1)	107	13.6		
5 – 10 (2)	350	44.4		
10 – 15 (3)	174	22.1		
15 – 20 (4)	97	12.3		
More than 20 (5)	60	7.6		

No missing values were reported as shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Missing Values

		Gender	Ethnicity	School Level	Position	Highest Degree Earned	Years of Experience
N	Valid	788	788	788	788	788	788
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Crosstabulations for gender & experience are as follows:

4.3 Gender * Years of Experience Crosstabulation

			Years of Experience					Total
			0 – 5	5 - 10	10 - 15	15 - 20	More than 20	
Gender	Male	Count	10	20	10	20	20	80
		% within Gender	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within Years of Experience	9.3%	5.7%	5.7%	20.6%	33.3%	10.2%
		% of Total	1.3%	2.5%	1.3%	2.5%	2.5%	10.2%
	Female	Count	97	330	164	77	40	708
		% within Gender	13.7%	46.6%	23.2%	10.9%	5.6%	100.0%
		% within Years of Experience	90.7%	94.3%	94.3%	79.4%	66.7%	89.8%
		% of Total	12.3%	41.9%	20.8%	9.8%	5.1%	89.8%
Total		Count	107	350	174	97	60	788
		% within Gender	13.6%	44.4%	22.1%	12.3%	7.6%	100.0%
		% within Years of Experience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	13.6%	44.4%	22.1%	12.3%	7.6%	100.0%

Statistical Analyses

Table 4.4 contains a summary of the aggregated respondent responses for the survey items with regard to the perceptions of the causes and effects that the respondents felt the factors had on closing the achievement gap.

Table 4.4 Cause and Effect – Summary of Responses, Means, and Standard Deviations

Item	1 (Negative Impact)		2 (No Impact)		3 (Low Impact)		4 (Medium Impact)		5 (High Impact)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
7. Smaller schools & Charter Schools	20	2.5	30	3.8	165	20.9	281	35.7	292	37.1	4.01	.981
8. Same gender schools	20	2.5	107	13.6	379	48.1	253	32.1	29	3.7	3.21	.814
9. Class-size reduction					10	1.3	94	11.9	684	86.8	4.86	.386
10. Per pupil exp. above \$5,000			19	2.4	148	18.8	221	28.0	400	50.8	4.27	.848
11. After school programs					186	23.6	358	45.4	244	31.0	4.07	.736
12. Parent Involvement					20	2.5	78	9.9	690	87.6	4.85	.422
13. Leadership within the school					20	2.5	197	25.0	571	72.5	4.70	.511
14. Data use			20	2.5	127	16.1	341	43.3	300	38.1	4.17	.785

For each set of questions, pattern matrices are given. The pattern matrix for beliefs and attitudes is reported below in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Cause & Effect Pattern Matrix(a)

	Component		
	1	2	3
Leadership within school	<u>.806</u>	-.169	.165
Parent Involvement	<u>.787</u>	-.099	-.218
Data Use among Admin.	<u>.588</u>	.206	.004
Class-Size Reduction	-.285	<u>.840</u>	-.022
Per Pupil Expenditure	.039	<u>.796</u>	.021
After School Programs	.332	<u>.582</u>	-.049
Same Gender Schools	-.179	-.096	<u>.925</u>
Smaller/Charter Schools	.271	.181	<u>.583</u>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

The remaining sections of the survey information were tabulated and analyzed with respect to the research questions. In this section, an analysis of survey items is presented along with the relevant data. A copy of the computed frequencies for all survey items appears throughout the analysis.

Table 4.6 reports the response frequencies and means for the items dealing with respondent perceptions of their own knowledge base of the causes and effects of factors in relation to closing the achievement gap. The first item regarding small schools was left out because it appears a mistake was made in putting the data into SPSS; there are only 648 values.

**Table 4.6. Development of Knowledge Base
Summary of Responses, Means, and Standard Deviations for Survey Items**

Item	1 (Not at all Important)		2 (Minimal Importance)		3 (Somewhat Important)		4 (Important)		5 (Very Important)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
16. Same gender schools	79	10.0	264	33.5	318	40.4	108	13.7	19	2.4	2.65	.921
17. Class-size reduction	20	2.5			87	11.0	184	23.4	497	63.1	4.44	.879
18. Per pupil exp. above \$5,000	39	4.9	39	4.9	125	15.9	300	38.1	285	36.2	3.96	1.08
19. After school programs			59	7.5	108	13.7	386	49.0	235	29.8	4.01	.858
20. Parent Involvement							55	7.0	733	93.0	4.93	.255
21. Leadership within the school					30	3.8	146	18.5	612	77.7	4.74	.519
22. Data use			20	2.5	146	18.5	270	34.3	352	44.7	4.21	.831

The pattern matrix for the knowledge base is given in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Knowledge Base Pattern Matrix(a)

	Component		
	1	2	3
Same Gender Schools	<u>.847</u>	<u>-.422</u>	.041
Class-Size Reduction	<u>.764</u>	.139	-.069
After School Programs	<u>.537</u>	.340	.057
Parent Involvement	-.181	<u>.920</u>	.020
Per Pupil Expenditure	<u>.481</u>	<u>.626</u>	-.017
Data Use among admin.	.079	-.083	<u>.834</u>
Leadership within school	-.088	.116	<u>.825</u>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 4.8 reports the response frequencies and means for the items dealing with respondent perceptions of the content knowledge they gained from their own counselor preparation program in relation to closing the achievement gap.

In regards to question 30, *“My counselor preparation program helped me to feel confident in my abilities to advocate for children”*, the mean for counselors was 4.133. A number of counselors praised the skill development that occurred throughout the program, commenting “All in all, the program was very thorough” and “Overall, I think my training was very good.” A few counselors commented that the university faculty is important in providing this knowledge base stating positive aspects such as, “I had several excellent professors and feel that I could call on them if I had questions about an issue.” Others reported negative aspects such as, “College faculty who are not current practitioners in schools should spend time in schools and/or use current school counselors to come in and teach topics that they (the university staff professors) do not have experience with.” Respondents went on to elaborate that “while these are not ‘ideal’ conditions of school counselors in terms of the scheduling and special education meetings, for most it is a reality. Rather than telling counselor education students they should not perform those duties and tell their principal so – they should learn now to be prepared for these activities.” Other respondents echoed these sentiments with, (1) “Counseling preparation programs need to recognize what counselors actually have to do after they are employed rather than what counselors should be doing;” (2) “I spend very little of my time counseling students and doing what I was trained to do as a counselor ... New counselors need to know the real story about counseling, not what should happen in the perfect setting;” and (3) “Although my instructors in my counselor education program

repeatedly told me that scheduling and other administrative duties were not the role of the school counselor, that is not the reality of what happens in the job. It is not helpful to tell us that we aren't supposed to do those things when our principals tell us that it is part of our duties.... I got a great deal of training in counseling, and I still feel that my first priority is counseling, but there are SO MANY hats that a school counselor has to wear, and it is unrealistic for the instructors in the counseling education programs to assume that our role is so narrowly focused."

Some counselors thought more emphasis on skills was necessary, stating, (1) "More knowledge and practice in large group guidance activities – this is the only way to reach all the students in your school;" (2) "I do a great deal of paperwork concerning scheduling, enrolling and withdrawing students and, of course, testing. I received NO training for such tasks in my program. Programs should concentrate more on practical skills and less on theory;" (3) "I would like to see more preparation in how to set up and organize an effective comprehensive guidance program. I believe that, at times, the skills training we receive is too piece meal. We need to show the younger students the importance of putting it all together." Several counselors commented that less emphasis on theory would be helpful, stating, "I would like to see less time spent on theory and more time spent on real life practical application of those theories. A balance must be found between developing counseling skills and meeting the demands of the role of the counselor within the local school system" and "More emphasis on the day to day running of a school guidance program. The theories are great, but application in twenty minutes or less is the norm."

Table 4.8. Content Knowledge in Relation to Closing the Achievement Gap: Respondents perceptions of the content knowledge gained from their own counselor preparation programs

Item	1 (Strongly Disagree)		2 (Disagree)		3 (Neither Agree Nor Disagree)		4 (Agree)		5 (Strongly Agree)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
23. I believe that having students participating in Social Skills programs will increase academic achievement.			10	1.3	39	4.9	349	44.3	390	49.5	4.42	.648
24. I understand how to implement a Social Skills program.			38	4.8	68	8.6	329	41.8	353	44.8	4.27	.811
25. I believe that learning communities which practice teaming and collaboration improves student achievement.					87	11.0	272	34.5	429	54.4	4.43	.683
26. I have developed a clear understanding of Diversity Issues in my counselor prep. Program.			48	6.1	96	12.2	418	53.0	226	28.7	4.04	.807
27. In my counselor prep. program, I learned how Ethnic Culture is related to student achievement.	9	1.1	66	8.4	213	27.0	353	44.8	147	18.7	3.71	.902
28. My counselor prep. Program helped me to feel confident in my Leadership Skills.	10	1.3	69	8.8	194	24.6	331	42.0	184	23.4	3.77	.946
29. My counselor prep. Program helped me to feel confident in my abilities to advocate for all children.			30	3.8	137	17.4	319	40.5	302	38.3	4.13	.823
30. My counselor prep. Program helped me to feel confident in my skills of Counseling & Coordination.			40	5.1	107	13.6	447	56.7	194	24.6	4.01	.765
31. My counselor prep. Program help me to feel prepared to use data and accountability to help students in closing the achievement gap.	29	3.7	185	23.5	283	35.9	252	32.0	39	4.9	3.11	.942
32. My counselor prep. Program helped me to understand the ASCA standards as they relate to counselors and follow them in my practice.	39	4.9	60	7.6	153	19.4	350	44.4	186	23.6	3.74	1.06
33. My counselor prep. Program helped to instill in me the belief that all students have the capacity to achieve.					98	12.4	427	54.2	263	33.4	4.21	.644

Table 4.9 reports the pattern matrix for content knowledge in relation to closing the achievement gap.

Table 4.9 Content Knowledge & Achievement Gap Pattern Matrix(a)

	Component		
	1	2	3
Program instilled belief that all children can achieve	<u>.964</u>	-.342	.081
Program gave confidence in advocating for children	<u>.766</u>	.146	-.017
Program gave confidence in coordination skills	<u>.694</u>	.192	.002
Program gave confidence in leadership skills	<u>.511</u>	.391	-.045
Program gave understanding of ASCA Standards	<u>.425</u>	.393	.135
Ethnic Culture and relation to student achievement	-.099	<u>.933</u>	.002
Understanding of diversity issues	-.037	<u>.874</u>	.100
Program prepared for using data	.412	<u>.487</u>	-.206
Understand how to implement social skills lessons	-.015	.022	<u>.787</u>
Belief in having social skills lessons	.194	-.176	<u>.784</u>
Belief in teaming and collaboration	-.153	.309	<u>.667</u>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

In section V, question 35, *How often did you receive feedback from a faculty member about your counseling skills?*”, only 16.1 percent said that they never received received feedback or seldom received feedback. Yet, one of these respondents commented that “Feedback would be wonderful; watching other counselors and evaluating them would be wonderful. When I began counseling, it was hard to confront parents about behavior issues, plan guidance lessons that correlate with core content, and individual counseling was hardest. I would have loved to have scenarios to role-play in college with professor feedback so that I could learn these skills in a more comfortable environment.” This indicates that the 58 percent that received occasionally or frequently benefited from that feedback by receiving this “wonderful feedback”.

In regards to question 37, *How often did you observe someone counseling?*”, only 49.4 percent had opportunities to observe a practicing counselor. Comments such as the following appeared on several surveys to show that less than 50

percent was not good enough: (1) “More hands-on experiences – actually observing counselors in action. More time spent in a ‘real’ school to understand the diversity of problems that you might encounter”; (2) “As an elementary counselor, I would have liked observing more counseling sessions with children as clients”; (3) “I believe that students interested in the Counselor Education program need the opportunity to visit a real life school counseling setting in high, middle and elementary school. Small school and large school settings would be desired in order for students to have a realistic idea of their responsibilities prior to obtaining a position as a school counselor;” (4) “Receiving more consultation and observation of ‘practicing’ counselors that actually get to do counseling and guidance. An internship program for new counselors: Principals and teachers have KPIP and KTIP, but counselors do not have KCIP.” That final suggestion seems to be one on which to really spend some quality time. Some districts attempt to provide this through an informal mentoring system, but a statewide required Intern program would be very helpful! Several others agreed with this response commenting, “... require and internship with a counselor; bring in real-life situation that counselors deal with and let students see how to resolve/deal with these issues; have counselors come to classes and share about their day to day routines and how they deal with faculty, parents, peer conflicts, staff, etc.” Descriptive data for these survey items appear in Table 4.10 in terms of frequency or rate of occurrence and Table 4.11 in terms of counselor effectiveness. The explanation of total variance and the pattern matrix for content knowledge in relation to counseling are given in Tables 4.12 and 4.13 in terms of frequency.

Table 4.10 Content Knowledge in Relation to Counseling – Frequency/Rate of Occurrence

Item	1 (Never)		2 (Seldom)		3 (Sometimes)		4 (Occasionally)		5 (Frequently)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
34. Discussions about Counseling Phil.	39	4.9	192	24.4	245	31.1	205	26.0	107	13.6	3.19	1.10
35. Feedback about counseling skills	30	3.8	97	12.3	204	25.9	232	29.4	225	28.6	3.67	1.13
36. Opportunities to Reflect on F/B	49	6.2	76	9.6	186	23.6	261	33.1	216	27.4	3.66	1.16
37. Observation of Counseling	59	7.5	146	18.5	194	24.6	234	29.7	155	19.7	3.36	1.20
38. Discussions about learning differences	40	5.1	94	11.9	263	33.4	263	33.4	128	16.2	3.44	1.06

Table 4.11 Content Knowledge in Relation to Counseling - Effectiveness

Item	1 (Not at all Effective)		2 (Somewhat Effective)		3 (Neither Effective Nor Ineffective)		4 (Effective)		5 (Very Effective)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
39. Discussions about Counseling Phil.	30	3.8	104	13.2	362	45.9	262	33.2	30	3.8	3.20	.854
40. Feedback about Counseling skills	10	1.3	87	11.0	186	23.6	417	52.9	88	11.2	3.62	.870
41. Reflection on Feedback			59	7.5	216	27.4	396	50.3	117	14.8	3.73	.804
42. Observation of someone counseling	10	1.3	59	7.5	186	23.6	318	40.4	215	27.3	3.85	.949
43. Discussions about learning differences	19	2.4	104	13.2	305	38.7	271	34.4	89	11.3	3.39	.935

Table 4.12 Content Knowledge & Counseling Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.452	49.036	49.036	2.452	49.036	49.036
2	.977	19.545	68.581			
3	.755	15.105	83.686			
4	.529	10.570	94.256			
5	.287	5.744	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4.13 Content Knowledge & Counseling Component Matrix(a)

	Component 1
Feedback about counseling skills	.856
Opportunities to reflect on feedback	.832
Frequency of Counseling Observations	.626
Discussions about counseling philosophy	.625
Frequency of discussion on Ind. Learning Diff.	.494

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a 1 components extracted.

The explanation of total variance and the pattern matrix for content knowledge in relation to counseling are given in Tables 4.14 and 4.15 in terms of effectiveness.

**Table 4.14 Content Knowledge & Counseling – Effectiveness
Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.836	56.711	56.711	2.836	56.711	56.711
2	.853	17.053	73.764			
3	.613	12.256	86.020			
4	.431	8.623	94.643			
5	.268	5.357	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Table 4.15 Content Knowledge & Counseling – Effectiveness
Component Matrix(a)**

	Component 1
Effectiveness of Feedback about Counseling Skills	.856
Effectiveness of Opportunities to Reflect on Feedback	.810
Effectiveness of Frequency of Counseling Observation	.745
Effectiveness of Discussion about Counseling Philosophy	.716
Effectiveness of Discussions on Ind. Learning Differences	.616

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a 1 components extracted.

The survey asked respondents to rate eighteen most commonly offered courses in the Counselor Education Program on two levels, (1) the relevance of the course to the job activities, (2) the value of knowledge and skills gained. Most students rated their program's coursework in relation to the relevance of preparing them to address the achievement gap positively as given in Table 4.7 below. However, the responses to the specific courses were varied as would be expected. For example, counselors rated Research Methods and Techniques at a mean score of 2.93 and Supervised Research at a mean score of 2.86. Lower scores for these courses may signify possible issues regarding students' perceptions of the quality of these courses.

Table 4.16 Counselor's Perceptions of the Relevance of their Education and Training in Preparation for Addressing the Achievement Gap

Item	1 (None)		2		3		4		5 (Substantial)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
44. Research Methods and Techniques	96	12.2	126	16.0	310	39.3	189	24.0	39	4.9	2.93	1.06
45. Statistics	69	8.8	96	12.2	290	36.8	167	21.2	78	9.9	3.13	1.10
46. Counseling Practicum	30	3.8	58	7.4	264	33.5	210	26.6	226	28.7	3.69	1.08
47. Internship	40	5.1	58	7.4	156	19.8	192	24.4	139	17.6	3.74	1.46
48. Intro. to Counseling & Psychotherapy	78	9.9	144	18.3	264	33.5	154	19.5	98	12.4	3.07	1.16
49. Evaluation & Measurement	60	7.6	58	7.4	224	28.4	242	30.7	137	17.4	3.47	1.13
50. Human Development	30	3.8	106	13.5	146	18.5	291	36.9	127	16.1	3.54	1.08
51. Career Development and Counseling	40	5.1	98	12.4	300	38.1	176	22.3	106	13.5	3.29	1.05
52. Consultation	20	2.5	37	4.7	124	15.7	176	22.3	89	11.3	3.62	1.04
53. Organization & Administration	49	6.2	39	4.9	145	18.4	212	26.9	80	10.2	3.45	1.12
54. School Guidance Programs & Services	19	2.4	17	2.2	177	22.5	229	29.1	120	15.2	3.73	.941
55. Theories & Tech. of Counseling	58	7.4	116	14.7	224	28.4	233	29.6	128	16.2	3.34	1.15
56. Assessment Methods for Counselors	10	1.3	38	4.8	245	31.1	230	29.2	70	8.9	3.53	.846
57. Group Process & Practice	58	7.4	108	13.7	232	29.4	222	28.2	118	15.0	3.31	1.14
58. Professional ethics	69	8.8	58	7.4	155	19.7	203	25.8	166	21.1	3.52	1.25
59. Multicultural issues	29	3.7	49	6.2	173	22.0	232	29.4	158	20.1	3.69	1.06
60. Learning theory	29	3.7	77	9.8	174	22.1	136	17.3	97	12.3	3.38	1.12
61. Supervised research	67	8.5	66	8.4	147	18.7	66	8.4	40	5.1	2.86	1.20
62. Counseling Children and/or Adolescents	48	6.1	49	6.2	153	19.4	203	25.8	187	23.7	3.68	1.88

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to construct of survey requesting that respondents only respond to courses that had been completed.

When rating courses based upon the value of knowledge and skills gained, means for counselors ranged from 2.77 to 3.65 as seen in frequency counts listed in Table 4.17 below. This indicates that, overall, counselors agree that they gained valuable knowledge and skills in most courses. Courses rated highly by both counselors and counselor educators include Counseling Practicum with a mean score of 3.63, Internship with a

mean score of 3.61, Consultation with a mean score of 3.57, and Human Development with a mean score of 3.55.

While the majority of courses received very positive ratings, there were several courses that received mean scores of less than three, which indicated that a number of counselors felt the value of skills and knowledge gained through the course was poor. The same two courses as noted in the relevance section, Research Methods with a mean score of 2.81 and Supervised Research with a mean score of 2.77, along with Statistics with a mean score of 2.94 were rated by the majority of counselors at a level of three or lower. One comment addressed another issue regarding the perceived value of instruction: “Things that would help the program would be the universities and colleges working more with the public schools and the role of the counselor.” This statement along with the high ratings for courses that put counseling students in the schools – Practicum and Internship – show that counselors put great value in learning from those “on the job”, as it were.

When asked to rate the relevance of Internship, the mean response was 3.74 while the value of knowledge and skills gained in relation to the achievement gap was 3.61, indicating positive for the course as a whole. Practicum also had this relative correlation with a mean response of 3.69 in relation to the relevance and a mean response of 3.63 in relation to the value of knowledge and skills gained. This again supports that counselors place a high value on learning from practicing counselors within the field.

Counselors agreed that consultation was important with a relevance of 3.62 and a

Table 4.17 Counselor's Perceptions of the Value of Knowledge and Skills Gained in Relation to the Achievement Gap

Item	1 (Very Little)		2		3		4		5 (Very Much)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
44. Research Methods and Techniques	168	21.3	117	14.8	232	29.4	175	22.2	68	8.6	2.81	1.26
45. Statistics	118	15.0	116	14.7	235	29.8	156	19.8	77	9.8	2.94	1.22
46. Counseling Practicum	30	3.8	70	8.9	274	34.8	200	25.4	214	27.2	3.63	1.09
47. Internship	40	5.1	69	8.8	134	17.0	177	22.5	164	20.8	3.61	1.20
48. Intro. to Counseling & Psychotherapy	50	6.3	153	19.4	282	35.8	148	18.8	108	13.7	3.15	1.11
49. Evaluation & Measurement	69	8.8	49	6.2	214	27.2	272	34.5	116	14.7	3.44	1.13
50. Human Development	29	3.7	87	11.0	173	22.0	295	37.4	119	15.1	3.55	1.04
51. Career Development and Counseling	58	7.4	107	13.6	253	32.1	203	25.8	98	12.4	3.25	1.11
52. Consultation	19	2.4	50	6.3	116	14.7	185	23.5	78	9.9	3.57	1.03
53. Organization & Administration	59	7.5	29	3.7	116	14.7	245	31.1	78	9.9	3.48	1.15
54. School Guidance Programs & Services	39	4.9	20	2.5	195	24.7	205	26.0	107	13.6	3.57	1.05
55. Theories & Tech. of Counseling	40	5.1	128	16.2	259	32.9	194	24.6	139	17.6	3.35	1.12
56. Assessment Methods for Counselors	10	1.3	30	3.8	302	38.3	183	23.2	70	8.9	3.46	.829
57. Group Process & Practice	60	7.6	117	14.8	281	35.7	145	18.4	137	17.4	3.25	1.17
58. Professional ethics	70	8.9	50	6.3	202	25.6	163	20.7	168	21.3	3.47	1.25
59. Multicultural issues	49	6.2	20	2.5	215	27.3	213	27.0	146	18.5	3.60	1.10
60. Learning theory	20	2.5	69	8.8	156	19.8	183	23.2	89	11.3	3.49	1.05
61. Supervised research	80	10.2	62	7.9	161	20.4	49	6.2	40	5.1	2.77	1.21
62. Counseling Children and/or Adolescents	50	6.3	39	4.9	163	20.7	225	28.6	167	21.2	3.65	1.16

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to construct of survey requesting that respondents only respond to courses that had been completed.

value mean of 3.57. Supporting comments from counselors were:

- "... We also spend a great deal of time counseling and consulting with parents so this needs to be an area of focus as well."

- “...working with community agencies such as social services, law enforcement and local comprehensive care or other mental health agencies.”
- “Students in college need examples and experiences meeting with parents and about student concerns.”

For the course, Group Process and Practice, response resulted in a mean of 3.32 for relevance and a value mean of 3.25. In regards to this course, many comments from graduates seem to agree that “...more time with individuals and small groups would definitely help close the achievement gap...Students with things on their minds, whether they be large or small, have difficulty concentrating on learning...Getting rid of these obstacles to learning would increase the efficiency of the class teacher and the lessons provided.” The relative means for this course in relation to others may, in part, be explained by the fact that counselors do not get to do the activities taught in these courses as often as we would wish. The following comment summarizes a suggestion proposed by several counselors: “I believe the program should be one of practicality and varied experiences. I also believe team-building within the school environment is crucial if counselors are to be respected for their expertise and professionalism. The guidance office is the ‘clearinghouse’ for the whole school and thus a counselor needs to have a strong awareness of how credits, transcripts, etc. work as well as an increased ‘counseling’ emphasis to meet the needs of our current student population. Counseling programs need to have their students actively involved in the local schools and have increased experience in the realities of the job. It is good to have a unit of study just on how to structure and play your days for the unexpected.”

In regards to section VII of the survey, counselors responded to questions regarding counselor beliefs and attitudes as reported in Table 4.18. Discussion of the data follows in Chapter five.

Table 4.18 Counselor Beliefs and Attitudes

Item	1 (Strongly Disagree)		2 (Disagree)		3 Neither Agree Nor Disagree		4 Agree		5 (Strongly Agree)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
63. Courses prepared me to close the achievement gap	19	2.4	213	27.0	293	37.2	224	28.4	39	4.9	3.07	.920
64. Children from low SES groups achieve at lesser levels	87	11.0	156	19.8	243	30.8	254	32.2	48	6.1	3.03	1.10
65. District Personnel can improve student achievement	20	2.5	49	6.2	125	15.9	448	56.9	146	18.5	3.83	.890
66. Principals can improve student achievement			10	1.3	79	10.0	420	53.3	279	35.4	4.23	.673
67. School counselors can improve student achievement					59	7.5	419	53.2	310	39.3	4.32	.606
68. Teachers can improve student achievement					10	1.3	185	23.5	593	75.3	4.74	.467
69. Parents can improve student achievement					10	1.3	98	12.4	680	86.3	4.85	.391

The pattern matrix for counselor beliefs and attitudes is reported in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19 Counselor Beliefs and Attitudes Pattern Matrix(a)

	Component	
	1	2
Principals can improve chances of student performance	.782	.096
District Personnel can improve chances of student performance	.705	-.141
Counselors can improve chances of student performance	.676	.278
Courses prepared to close achievement gap	.442	.269
Parents can improve chances of student performance	.066	.761
Teachers can improve chances of student performance	.239	.635
Low SES groups perform lower	-.552	.617

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The role groups that respondents felt had the most influence on closing the achievement gap were parents at 45.8 percent and teachers at 45.3 as reported in Table 4.20. While the parent score does not seem disheartening due to the massive volumes of research supporting parental involvement, the teacher score could seem discouraging to counselors. As the role group who was completing the survey are counselors, the fact that they ranked themselves so low in the hierarchy of being able to effect a change in the achievement gap speaks volumes for the job they feel they are doing. If we only had this score, it would be enough to warrant a change in the preparation program so that counselors can feel empowered.

Table 4.20 Role Group

Item	1 District Personnel		2 Principals		3 Counselors		4 Teachers		5 Parents	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
70. Which role has the most influence on closing the achievement gap?	20	2.5	40	5.1	10	1.3	357	45.3	361	45.8

The last section of the survey focused on counselor's perceived level of competency with regards to their experience in selected counselor activities related to closing the achievement gap. Table 4.21 displays the results of this section. Generally, counselors felt that they had gained a lot of experience in mental health with the areas of individual counseling, small group counseling and large group counseling reporting above 50 percent for very much experience in these areas. The areas that counseling felt unprepared were scheduling and college admission with both of these areas reporting above 50 percent for very little experience in these areas.

Table 4.21. Counselors Perceived Competency in Selected Areas Related to Closing the Achievement Gap

Indicate the relative amount of experience you gained in relation to the following activities in your preparation program	1 (Very Little)		2		3		4		5 (Very Much)		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
71. Individual Counseling			67	8.5	148	18.8	339	43.0	234	29.7	3.94	.907
72. Small Group Counseling	20	2.5	127	16.1	194	24.6	360	45.7	87	11.0	3.47	.972
73. Large Group Guidance	58	7.4	135	17.1	252	32.0	285	36.2	58	7.4	3.19	1.04
74. Social Skills programming	40	5.1	114	14.5	294	37.3	311	39.5	29	3.7	3.22	.917
75. Consultation	57	7.2	207	26.3	195	24.7	261	33.1	68	8.6	3.10	1.11
76. Testing Administration	194	24.6	126	16.0	245	31.1	175	22.2	48	6.1	2.69	1.23
77. Scheduling	400	50.8	185	23.5	88	11.2	68	8.6	47	6.0	1.96	1.23
78. Record keeping/ Paper work	361	45.8	187	23.7	116	14.7	96	12.2	28	3.6	2.04	1.19
79. Diversity or multicultural issues	58	7.4	108	13.7	279	35.4	274	34.8	69	8.8	3.24	1.04
80. Career counseling and/or job placement	117	14.8	114	14.8	299	37.9	205	26.0	50	6.3	2.94	1.12
81. College Admissions	389	49.4	177	22.5	163	20.7	50	6.3	9	1.1	1.87	1.02

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The premise of this study was that providing social and emotional support for students improves academic achievement and, thus, closes the achievement gap.

Research questions related to closing the achievement gap for students placed at risk were derived from the theoretical framework of the study. The role of counselors serving as part of the team of educators in closing the achievement gap and the training required to make those counselors a part of that team of educators was explored.

Results of this study adds to the knowledge base reported in the literature review. The information gained from this study can be used to serve as a foundation for future research concerning the counselor's role in helping to close the achievement gap and planning a counselor preparation program.

The objective of this chapter is three-fold. The first is to offer a synopsis of the literature review and the research methodology. The second is to provide an overview of the investigation and summarize the data analysis and results of the study. The discussion offers explanation and inferences of the results and research within this dissertation. Supports for the study's findings are drawn from the relevant literature in the field.

The review of the literature reveals that the reform movement throughout the past couple of decades has seen little change. The national focus on school improvement, beginning in the 1980's, increased interest in the study of closing the achievement gap by utilizing every resource within the school system. Yet, it seems as if – for all the talk of reform and change – that education has stood still. In some cases, these reforms created more difficult situations for students who were already in a tenuous position. The job of addressing the needs of students placed at risk and – thus – closing the achievement gap is not getting done. U.S. Surgeon General Satcher's report on the state of the American educational system, (Department of Health and Human Services, 1999), characterized the public school as failing our nation's youth. From the research on reform, it can best be said that reform is still a work in process. One specific restructuring or reorganization has not been found that succinctly corrects the problem of the achievement gap. Yet, it is understood among all educators and society that “there is little question that the fundamental purpose of education – what the ancient Greeks referred to as the *telos* - is to promote student learning” (Jalongo, 2007, p. 395). So, the question remains – where best to begin the restructuring and who best to implement it in order to best promote student learning?

The review of literature provides evidence that counselors have an important effect on the academic success of students. “School counselors are ideally positioned to serve as advocates for students and create opportunities for all students to reach these new high academic goals.” (Ed. Trust, Transforming) Yet, despite the emerging shortage of qualified candidates for counselor vacancies and the widely acknowledged importance of the counselor's role in school improvement, there are almost no empirical studies

about utilizing the role of the counselor in closing the achievement and the subsequent training of the counselor to assist in closing the achievement gap. The present study is among the first to empirically examine reactions of counselors, as members of the administrative team, to their training for the job. The study investigated counselor opinions on their university preparation program in training them to be able to assist in closing the achievement gap. The study also investigated counselor opinions on their ideas of the causes and effects of specific factors influence on the closing the achievement gap as well as the counselors' knowledge base of these factors.

The study is built upon a framework consisting of exploring the accessibility of training for educators to support students placed at risk. The first area of interest, students placed at risk, along with the school reform movements put into place to address these students has a strong impact on the third of interest, counselor preparation programs, because the counselor is the central figure in the educational system held responsible for both the emotional well-being and the academic success of all students. It is the counselor's basic responsibility to provide the supports that offer social emotional skills so that these students can function on an equal playing field in the academic arena. The counselor preparation program at the university level seems to be the best place to begin this influence on the counselor's ability to develop these skills. Appropriate counselor preparation could help provide the training that is needed for all educators within the collaborative support level of the counselor to work better with students placed at risk, allowing them to benefit from current educational reforms. The counselor, who is at the center of both teacher and student support, should be trained to provide the foundation

necessary to equip the teachers at the front line by way of both emotional and academic support.

. The primary purpose of this study was to answer the questions:

- (1) Does the program content in current counselor preparation programs satisfy the knowledge base needed for professional competency in relation to closing the achievement and supporting students placed at risk? That is, do the current counselors in today's schools feel that their preparation program prepared them for the demands of the counselor position they now hold in relation to promoting students' social and emotional skills so that their academic performance improves – especially those students that fall into the SPARS category? and
- (2) What are the best courses to offer in counselor preparation programs so that counselors are better prepared to promote students' social and emotional skills in order to improve their academic achievement?

This was accomplished by surveying counselors across Kentucky.

Discussion of Findings

A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove. But, the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.

Using the literature review and the research in this study as the basis for discussion, the major findings from the survey are summarized and analyzed within the parameters of this study: (a) reform and its relationship in closing the achievement gap, (b) the role of counselors in closing the achievement gap, and (c) the training that counselors need in order to be able to assist in closing the achievement gap.

The literature review was based on historical perspective of educational reforms as they relate to and define students placed at risk of school failure. The inclusion of the counselors' role in closing the achievement gap was a method of merging three streams of inquiry: (a) educational reforms, (b) students placed at risk of school failure, and (c) the ability of counselor training to answer the need of utilizing the student support role in closing the achievement gap. The data from the research showed that a change in the counselor preparation program could address the strategies that counselors require.

Respondents in this study possessed demographic variables that were representative of school counselors in the state of Kentucky. The school counseling professionals worked in grade levels K – 12 with the breakdown of 44.3% (n = 349) in the elementary setting, 21.1% (n = 166) in the middle school, and 34.6% (n = 273) in high school. Hence, the data contains a representative sample from elementary, middle and high school levels. This may allow generalizability of this study to school counselors from grade levels K – 12 in school districts similar in demographics and region.

The majority of school counselor participants (58.0 percent) worked as school counselors for 10 years or less with 13.6 percent in the 0 -5 year range and 44.4 percent in the 5 – 10 year range.

The first research question explored whether the program content in current counselor preparation programs satisfies the knowledge base needed for professional competency in relation to closing the achievement and supporting students placed at risk. The data revealed that current school counselors in today's schools feel, for the most part, that their preparation program did not prepare them for the demands of the counselor position they now hold in relation to promoting students' social and emotional skills so that their academic performance improves – especially those students that fall into the SPARS category. Many of the counselors indicated within the comment section that they felt unprepared for that first year as a counselor, citing a lack of specific training or knowledge to which they might turn. Counselors viewed the training prior to their implementation of the job as inadequate and a limiting factor to both their initial readiness and their current level of satisfaction with their counseling position.

Perhaps this is why only 1.3 percent of counselors felt that they had an influence on closing the achievement gap. If the counselors job is defined as making a difference in children's lives and meeting the child's needs, then it is a substantial dilemma that counselors feel that they are not effective in closing the achievement gap. This was the largest surprise in the research. More than 86% had over five years of experience. So, these counselors had both training and experience. Yet, they did not feel that they had any impact at all on closing the achievement gap. This data, in and of itself, supports a major restructuring of the counselor preparation program. Counselors need to feel empowered to effect a change in children's lives. This response displays that counselors do not feel that they are making a difference in the lives of children. That is the major reason most educators go into the field. The preparation program needs to provide power

to these counselors so that they can feel that they can they can have an influence on closing the achievement gap and therefore an influence on children's lives.

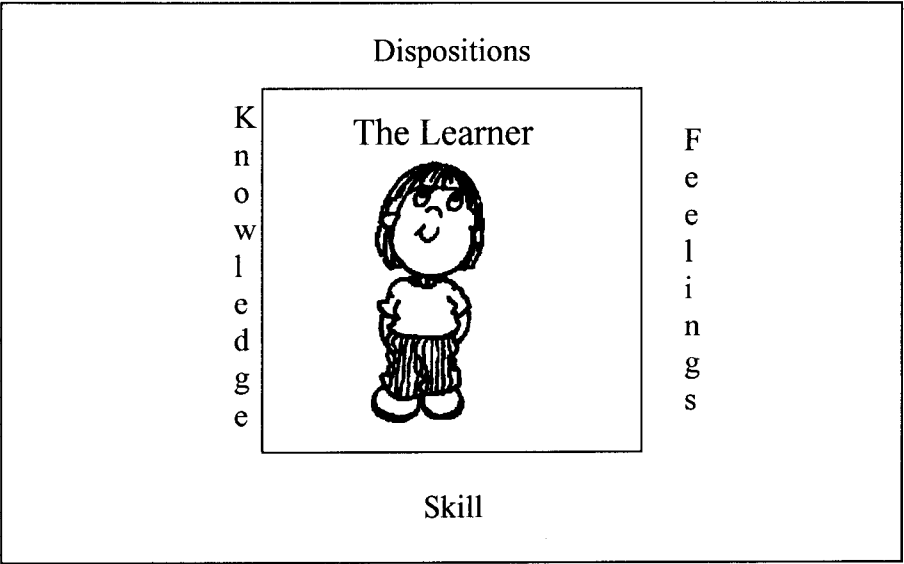
Wolk (2007) poses a critical question when he writes, "We are living a schooling delusion. Do we really believe that our schools inspire our children to live a life of thoughtfulness, imagination, empathy, and social responsibility?" (p. 649). It is the counselor, at the heart of the social and emotional development, to infuse these ideals into the school culture as well as the school culture.

This is where the purpose of this study comes largely into focus as this social responsibility piece seems to be the missing link that is keeping our educational system in gridlock. We can no longer teach as if academic performance and social responsibility are two separate entities. Invite a group of educators to diagram the learning process and most of their depictions will be linear models (e.g., ladders, steppingstones, or building blocks), all of which imply that individual learners make incremental, evenly spaced progress toward attaining higher levels of learning (Jalongo, 2007, p. 396). It is as if we as educators and society alike have been brainwashed to think that children are parts or pieces on an assembly all riding along collecting academic information at the same pace and, likewise, absorbing it at the same pace. Learning is much more complex. It involves the whole person, the experience and histories of that person, the social culture, baggage and so on. We can no longer think of learning as a linear model. Learning – both inside and outside of school – is far too complicated to be represented by concise definitions and simplistic models (Jalongo, 2007, p. 396). We must recognize all parts of the individual.

Katz (1988) provides a useful conceptualization of learning when she asserts that learning consists of four interrelated types: knowledge – acquiring information; skill – the ability to demonstrate a particular behavioral repertoire; feelings – the emotions connected with the learning; and dispositions – “habits of mind” that become internalized, such as curiosity or persistence (Jalongo, 2007, p. 396).

Using this conceptualization, the connection between social responsibility and academic performance becomes clearer. Let us consider the learner as connecting the four sides of a square. The lower right angle forms the academic base with the sides of knowledge and skills, while the upper right angle forms the support of social responsibility of dispositions and feelings. The education of the learner is left open if only one construct is addressed. It takes both academic performance and social responsibility to close the figure and make a well-formed learner. We cannot continue to focus on learning as if it were linear with open angles. We must close the form and address the whole learner.

Figure 5.1 The Balanced Learner



Social responsibility directly effects academic performance as supported by Maslow, Glasser, and many other theorists discussed in the literature review. Ignoring the affective aspects of learning actually contradicts much of what we gleaned from neuroscience about the role of emotions in learning (Jensen, 2006; Sousa, 2006). Learning is affective as well as cognitive; “We have to play to the emotional brain; then and only then, will we open up the intellectual brain” (Gilbert, 2002, p. 2). If we continue to ignore the connection, then we will continue to create inertia within the field that keeps spinning wheels without getting anywhere.

This study is a platform for restructuring the profession so that counselors can feel effective with all children, especially those SPAR’s that fall into the lower echelon of the achievement gap. As leaders, counselors need to be the lynchpin for infusing social responsibility into the structure of closing the achievement gap. We can no longer accept that academic achievement is a separate entity apart from social responsibility. This is similar to accepting that people can accept laws and rules of society without understanding why. The argument harkens back to the age old question from students, “Why do I have to know this?” We all have to know why we are learning before we can learn. Social responsibility allows an answer for this question. We must learn academics so that we can be productive citizens – not just contributors to economics, but fully rounded people. We are not just the job that we do. We are daughters, sons, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, friends, and so on. When we learn the foundation of the reason for learning, then we can grasp the academic domain.

Social responsibility means understanding that a democracy is not just about our rights but equally about our responsibilities. (Wolk, 2007, p. 254). Needless to say, this orientation is usually the opposite of the American way of life, especially in our current litigious society. We, both children and adults, expect rights without responsibilities. Most people do not seem to grasp that if I have a right to feel safe in society, then it is my responsibility to help to make society safe. If I have a right to expect others to be honest and trustworthy, then I have a responsibility to be honest and trustworthy. This maxim continues. The training program is the place to begin to prepare counselors to be able to infuse these ideals within the academic curriculum of our schools. As mentioned in the introduction, the two kinds of learning – academic performance and social and emotional performance – are intimately connected. Promoting students’ social and emotional skills plays a critical role in improving their academic performance.

In the survey responses, counselors felt that professors were modeling the practice of social responsibility within the program through the trait of thoughtfulness by being available for reflection and feedback, saying “I had several excellent professors and feel that I could call on them if I had questions about an issue.” Counselors need to call on these educators to say that Higher Education is letting us down. The coursework needs to focus on the counselor’s role and responsibility in bring social responsibility into the academic arena.

Causes and Effects

The respondents felt that the factors that had the most effect on closing the achievement gap were class-size reduction with a mean of 4.86 and leadership within the

school with a mean of 4.70. While class-size reduction may be an economic driven factor and not directly within the realm of the counselor's control, the counselor is on the leadership team and therefore has control of this factor. In this factor and many others, the counselor can and does have a positive effect on student achievement in terms of closing the achievement gap. The leader counselor can bring the social and emotional curriculum into the classroom. Nel Noddings (1992) has written extensively and eloquently about the vital need to teach caring in our classrooms. She writes that caring should be the foundation of our curriculum and that its study should include caring for self, family friends, others, animals and plants, the Earth and its ecosystems, human-made objects and ideas.

While teaching social responsibility is the job of all educators, it is the direct duty of counselors as leaders within the school to ensure that social responsibility is not only included within the curriculum but a major foundational piece of the curriculum. Perhaps this is where counselors can have a direct effect on the No Child Left Behind reform – to assure that social and emotional skills are embedded throughout the academic curriculum. And, as we are teaching social responsibility within the context of academic performance, it would seem efficacious to measure each student against their own progress. The title “No Child Left Behind” seems to imply that each child is measured against his own progress. Yet, in Kentucky, students are measured as a group. Each fourth grade group is measured against the next random fourth grade group rather than measuring each student's progress from grade to grade. Though this may seem to answer the question of student transition because the student groups can be measured as a whole within each school, the one-hundred day rule also responds to this concern. In the one-

hundred day rule, the school is only accountable for the students' scores if they are present and receiving instruction within that school for one-hundred days or greater. If we measure student progress from one year to the next, this rule levels the playing field of the school accountability by measuring the progress of only the students who receive instruction within that school. The transient students would report back to the state only. In this measurement, the essence of the No Child Left Behind reform is addressed because we are measuring each child's progress rather than measuring random groups of students against each other.

This goes to the heart of the No Child Left Behind reform in measuring average yearly progress. The choice of words is interesting here. The measure is reported as average yearly progress implying that student progress is measured. But, in Kentucky's case, it is actually the average yearly progress of the teachers as the student's progress is never really measured. It is the teaching of the fourth grade teachers measured from year to year in the fourth grade, the fifth grade teachers measured against themselves, and so on. Never is the student progress actually measured as students have not even taken the same test from year to year in the past. But, with this year – Spring 2008 – the students will all be taking both reading and math. The counselor should lead the charge in presenting a novel idea that each student's progress should be measured based on progress from year to year. By evaluating student progress in this manner, we are actually measuring student achievement and growth in both the social context of progress from year to year as well as academic progress in terms of learning. We are not separating out the academic component from the social if we measure student progress from year to year.

Social responsibility adds the idea of the well-rounded student into the mix. For example, Kentucky insists that students with special needs meet the same goals of the regular education students. This simply does not compute. The state has already qualified these students having special needs and, therefore, not being capable of learning at the same rate of the regular education population. But, then, they speak out of the other side of their mouth by measuring these students with the same unit. By measuring each student's progress from year to year, we are not setting these students up for failure – and, thus, saying that their teachers fail from the beginning. The test is modeling social responsibility in this manner by demonstrating that social norms are relative based on the individual rather than cast in stone based on a group norm. Each child functions in a different realm. By acknowledging this fact, we can truly say that we really care that no child is left behind rather than simply paying homage to the words.

What happened to vocational school? It was responsible for society in the social context to prepare students for their chosen vocation if they did not plan to attend college. Now, it is simply expected that *all* students will attend college, and education prepares students in that manner. What happens to the students who cannot or do not attend college? It seems that we have left these children behind. They now cannot be functional in society at all. This leaves us asking all those leaders who seem so concerned about self-esteem, “Where is these children's self-esteem?” It is non-existent, because we were so concerned about educating the few who do make it to college. These children became lost a long time ago, because they couldn't write a proper portfolio or open-response answer. Social responsibility requires that we educate the entire population and the entire child – not just those who can write or properly analyze

multiple choice questions. The counselor leader can begin to infuse this curriculum back into our schools and lobby for its inclusion in the No Child Left Behind testing.

It is interesting that respondents felt that smaller classes were of utmost importance to closing the achievement gap, while they felt that smaller schools had little impact. It is not the make-up of the school but the make-up of the classes within that school that has the most effect. This, again, reflects the argument for social responsibility. It is the community of learners within each classroom that remains important, because it is here that the foundation of social responsibility fosters academic learning. It is in this community where students learn to respect the both others as well as the learning of others. It is in this community where students learn empathy and concern for their fellow man. The leader counselor can have an influence on these classes through guidance classes on social skills and social responsibility as well as role modeling in the leadership position. The preparation program as well as professional development seminars and courses offered through the university can provide training in how to make the most of this leadership role by presenting guidance and modeling.

Knowledge Base

The means for the knowledge base items for counselors range from 2.65 to 4.93. If we remove the lowest factor, same gender schools, based on the fact that these are a new development and most educators do not have much experience with this due to the low numbers of such schools, then the means cluster more closely. The means without this factor range from 3.64 to 4.93, indicating that the overwhelming majority of

counselors agreed that the program content in current counselor preparation programs with regard to these factors does satisfy the knowledge base needed for professional competency in relation to closing the achievement and supporting students placed at risk. Students were most complimentary of the consultation courses that seems to offer practice in social responsibility, saying:

- “...We also spend a great deal of time counseling and consulting with parents so this needs to be an area of focus as well.”
- “...working with community agencies such as social services, law enforcement and local comprehensive care or other mental health agencies.”
- “Students in college need examples and experiences meeting with parents and about student concerns.”

Yet, we return back to the initial argument that counselors do not feel that they are making an influence on closing the achievement gap. So, even though they feel that they are receiving the appropriate knowledge base in reference to the job for which they are currently responsible, one has to wonder if the job specifications are appropriate. The knowledge base needs to include factors that empower the counselor to feel as if they are making a difference with students rather than just pushing papers and doing office work. It is the students that matter. The point is obvious. The schools feel as if the counselors are meeting the expectations of the administration, but counselors do not feel as if they are meeting the needs of the students in effecting a change in the achievement gap. Are the expectations appropriate?

Content Knowledge in Relation to the Achievement Gap

One of the respondents summed up this section best when s/he said, “The counselor education program prepared me for what I would LIKE to do in the public schools, which is work directly with children. However, it did not adequately prepare me for what I actually do, which includes SBARCS, other administrative duties, CSIPS (Comprehensive School Improve Program), committees, and all the minutia associated with state mandated testing.” This was originally the reason for the study in the first place – to help universities move into being able to prepare counselors for these duties as well. Yet, upon reflecting on the study and counselor’s perceptions that they do not effect a significant change over the parent, teacher, principal and even district personnel who rarely even have direct contact with students, this focus seems to pale in this light. Perhaps, the knowledge base that prepares for what they would like to do is more important than what they actually do. It seems more important to lobby for the inclusion of these social and emotional skills within the school curriculum than to actually train for the paper pushing that counselors are currently expected to do. It would be more advantageous both at an economic level as well as an educational level to hire clerks at lower rates of pay to push these papers and allow counselors to do what they are trained to do – infuse social skills into the academic performance of students.

Content Knowledge in Relation to Counseling

The idea of an Internship for Counselors (KCIP, Kentucky Counselor Internship Program) much like KTIP (Kentucky Teacher Internship Program) for teachers and KPIP

(Kentucky Principal Internship Program) for principals, suggested by several respondents, seems to be one on which to really spend some quality time. Some districts attempt to provide this through an informal mentoring system, but a statewide required Intern program would be very helpful! Several others agreed with this response commenting, "... require and internship with a counselor; bring in real-life situation that counselors deal with and let students see how to resolve/deal with these issues; have counselors come to classes and share about their day to day routines and how they deal with faculty, parents, peer conflicts, staff, etc." Many counselor respondents seem to be demanding or crying out for hands on experience or mentoring.

Perhaps it is this KCIP role that could infuse some of the training of social responsibility into the counselor role. That is, once the coursework is provided, the internship could provide a mentor to help the new counselors build this into the academic performance.

Education and Training

The second research question explored the best courses to offer in counselor preparation programs so that counselors are better prepared to promote students' social and emotional skills in order to improve their academic achievement. The responses to the specific courses were varied as would be expected. Most courses received mean scores higher than a three, which places them at a level of relevance between some and substantial. Nevertheless, several courses were rated by the majority of counselors at a level of three or lower. For example, counselors rated Research Methods and Techniques

at a mean score of 2.93 and Supervised Research at a mean score of 2.86. The fact that these courses both relate to research may indicate that counselors do not feel that research is in direct correlation to their work within the schools. These courses would be good to consider moving to the post masters or doctoral program in favor of the courses that counselors felt should be added.

One trend in comments written on surveys is important to note at this time. A number of school counseling graduates made comments regarding their lack of expertise and competence in areas of importance to their practice in the field. Several samples of these types of comments follow:

- “We are dealing with more and more very young emotionally disturbed children; my program did not prepare me for this and new counselors really need to come in prepared in this area.” Again, this is a cry from practicing counselors to include more social and emotional skills training within the program so that are prepared to take care of these students.
- “Many administrators rely on counselors as pseudo administrators, especially in elementary schools where there is only one principal and one counselor. They seek their advice and a counselor may also be the ‘next in command’ in some situations. I believe we CAN effect change, but it’s only fair to face the realities of the job. Learning about them only in practicum and internship is not enough. Seeing the realities at that time may be too late – and make a future counselor feel really unprepared. Obviously one cannot plan for everything, but being armed with what our real job is in most cases makes for a more level headed and not as

overwhelmed counselor. This way we can work with kids and hopefully make a difference.” This is a call to train counselors for leadership responsibilities so that they can be the practicing leader within the schools to indoctrinate social responsibility within the academic curriculum.

- “Real life experience – getting into the schools before practicum to give a more realistic view of what a school counselor does.”
- “Providing classes that are truly relevant to counseling in the school system. The belief that counselors only counsel is false. Scheduling, paperwork, meetings, etc. are all a reality in school counseling.” As mentioned before, all this scheduling and paperwork should be removed from the counselor’s day in favor of assigning it to a clerk. It does not seem economical to have counselors doing work that classified people can do. Allow the counselors to do what they are trained to do – help students with social and emotional skills.
- “When I took courses, there was very little differentiation between school counseling and agency counseling...They are very different, and I believe that school counselors need to understand agency counseling better as well as agency counselors need to be made aware of the school counselors position. It is very different and neither group seems to realize the difficulties that each have. When I work with agency counselors, they don’t seem to understand the obstacles that I school counselors are up against, such as 23 students in a room other than their client making behavior plans that they develop not always easy to implement. It would be best if we worked together instead as two separate entities.” It is simple social responsibility to work together rather than at odds with one another as both

agency counselors as well as school counselors are working toward the same goal
– helping students be the best they can be in society.

But, the respondents did not present a problem without also offering solutions.

The needs for additional offerings of courses addressing the following areas were mentioned in the comments:

1. *Testing.* “There needs to be more preparation in the area of dealing with testing issues including ‘closing the achievement gap’ and test administration. New counselors need to be more aware of the testing process and what all it entails so that they don’t feel overwhelmed when they have to deal directly with it.”
2. *Counseling Law/School Law.*
 - a. “There needs to more courses offered in Counseling Law so that counselors understand what laws apply to situations they may be faced with in their counseling settings.”
 - b. “I would have benefited from exposure to school law as it applies to school counseling.”
3. *Special Education/Data Analysis.*
 - a. “... there needs to be more emphasis on special education and data analysis.”
 - b. “My program did not require any instruction on ARC or Special Education Meetings, plans, etc. Thus, I was not prepared for these meetings.”

- c. “Other areas to be prepared for are gifted education such as gifted service plans and gifted identification.”
- d. “I would have liked to be more familiar with special education issues since I work in the area often, especially reading and discussing integrated reports.”
- e. “...more instruction about using statistics to help set up programs to meet the achievement needs of students.”

4. *Leadership and Special Education.*

- a. “...Leadership courses and preparation for ARC chairperson role...”
- b. “...more instruction about how to use and develop leadership skills in working faculty and staff in the school.”
- c. “With the thrust on closing the achievement gaps on our school, we are perceived as a member of our leadership team and the principal values our reflection and insights in decision making. Reality is that most counselors do work with the principal team... I had little training in this because often counselor preparation programs espouse that this is an ‘administrative role’.”
- d. “Devote significant effort in developing a realistic perspective of the role counselors play within the administrative culture.”
- e. “...more current problems in both counseling and administration, more time management, more administrative background. It is the

reality that we do not do as much counseling as we do
administering.”

5. *Social and Emotional Needs.* “More time needs to be spent on how to
assess the social and emotional needs of the students in a school.”

6. *Academic and Career Counseling.*

- a. “My training did nothing to prepare me for the real world of work
in the guidance department. I do very little personal counseling –
students who need that kind of work are referred to social workers
and programs which offer those specific services. Most of my
‘guidance’ opportunities deal with academic and career
counseling.”
- b. “... more training related to college, career planning.”
- c. “I believe a guidance program should have more emphasis on what
counselors actually do in terms of college and career counseling
and scheduling, etc.”

7. *Classroom Guidance.*

- a. “More instruction in group or classroom guidance programs.”
- b. “Being in the classroom and working with students is a must.”
- c. “Students in college need examples and experience with guidance
lessons...Scheduling guidance classes can be difficult.”
- d. “With character building lessons, counselors could help the
teacher’s classroom management – also helping to close the gap.

Thinking beyond courses as proof of the knowledge base, expected counselor activities should also be included within the training. Professional school counselors provide services to students, parents, school staff and the community within the following activities:

- *School Guidance Curriculum*: This curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to help students achieve the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school guidance curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and is systematically presented by professional school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K-12 classroom and group activities.
- *Individual Student Planning*: Professional school counselors coordinate ongoing systemic activities designed to help students establish personal goals and develop future plans.
- *Responsive Services*: Responsive services are preventative and/or interventive activities meeting students' immediate and future needs. These needs can be necessitated by events and conditions in students' lives and may require any of the following:
 - individual or group counseling
 - consultation with parents, teachers and other educators

- referrals to other school support services or community resources
- peer helping
- information

Professional school counselors develop confidential relationships with students to help them resolve or cope with problems and developmental concerns.

- *System Support:* System support consists of management activities establishing, maintaining and enhancing the total school counseling program. These activities include professional development, consultation, collaboration, program management and operations. Professional school counselors are committed to continual personal and professional development and are proactively involved in professional organizations promoting school counseling at the local, state and national levels. (Am. School Counselor Org., 2007, p. 1)

The training program should include these aspects within the curriculum of the coursework so that prospective counselors have the experience and feel prepared to lead in such activities.

Counselor Beliefs and Attitudes

Counselors were somewhat split about whether the courses in their program had been sufficient to prepare them to close the achievement gap responding with a mean of

3.07 for Item 63, *I believe the courses above have been sufficient to prepare to close the achievement gap*. This lackadaisical response seems to support the basic premise of the study that the program needs improvement.

Respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that children from low socioeconomic groups achieved at a lesser level than children from higher SES groups with a mean of 3.03 for Item 64, *Children from low SES groups achieve at a lesser level than children from higher SES groups..* While this was disheartening as the expected response would have been at the disagree or strongly disagree level, it was also comforting that the rhetoric has made some headway in educating a few that SES level in and of itself can be overcome. A positive role model can effect a change without regard to a student's background.

In the case of the role group statements, the respondents indicated rather high responses for all role groups with the exception of district level personnel. The role groups that respondents felt had the most influence on closing the achievement gap was parents at 45.8 percent and teachers at 45.3. While the parent score does not seem disheartening due to the massive volumes of research supporting parental involvement, the teacher score could seem discouraging to counselors. As the role group who was completing the survey are counselors, the fact that they ranked themselves so low in the hierarchy of being able to effect a change in the achievement gap speaks volumes for the job they feel they are doing. If we only had this score, it would be enough to warrant a change in the preparation program so that counselors can feel empowered.

Skills/Experience Related to Closing the Achievement Gap

Overall, a majority of respondents indicated they felt prepared in most of the areas with mean scores in six of the eleven areas falling above 3.0 in the range of 3.10 and 3.94. Skill areas in which counselors felt most prepared were Individual Counseling with a mean of 3.94, Small Group Counseling with a mean of 3.47, Diversity or Multicultural Issues with a mean of 3.24, Social Skills Programming with a mean of 3.22, Large Group Guidance with mean of 3.19 and Consultation with a mean of 3.10. Counselors felt least prepared in the areas of Career Counseling with a mean of 2.94, Testing Administration with a mean of 2.69, Recordkeeping and paperwork with a mean of 2.04, Scheduling with a mean of 1.96 and College Admissions with a mean of 1.87. One graduate managed to combine the one of the highest rated competencies with one of the lowest rated competencies to better her performance as she mentioned that she “...does some office work such as cumulative folders and enrolling new students. In our counseling classes, this was discussed as being negative because it took away from counseling. I have found enrolling new students a great opportunity to get to know the parents and the children. I often, if time allows, talk with the parents and children to find out why they moved, family relationships, etc. I often don’t have to say a lot because as they are filling out the paperwork the adults just talk to me. I come away knowing a lot about these children and their families.” This would be good information to share in coursework and training.

One of the respondents seemed to sum up the counselor’s role and the program very well when s/he said, “the role of the counselor is just so all encompassing that I’m

not sure any program can fully prepare you for all areas. A counselor must do continuing education on his or her own to stay current and relevant in the area he or she needs to address.” Even though we are trying to provide the best preparation program possible, it is the responsibility of each counselor – through their own training and EILA hours – to keep abreast of ongoing needs. Another respondent further supported this notion of new and evolving practices in the counseling field by commenting, “...this probably needs to be emphasized by having counselors attend yearly meetings of legal updates and refresher workshops.

Conclusions

This study was a descriptive analysis of counselors’ perceptions of their university preparation programs. Using descriptive analysis allowed this research to not only produce quantifiable results (frequency tables, analysis of relationships, etc.) but also allowed qualitative meaning supported by the data extracted as well as the comment section. This approach provided valuable information of both a quantitative and qualitative nature regarding the counselors’ preparation program and its relationship to closing the achievement gap for students placed at risk. Several conclusions were generated as a result of this research.

Conclusion 1: Current counselors in today’s schools do not feel that their preparation program prepared them for the demands of the counselor position they now hold in relation to promoting students’ social and emotional skills so that their academic performance improves – especially those students that fall into the SPARS category.

Conclusion 2: Counselors feel that they need a stronger knowledge base regarding data accountability.

Conclusion 3: Counselors feel that they need more support both in the early part of the program and following the program.

Conclusion 4: Counselors feel that the best courses to offer in counselor preparation programs so that they are better prepared to promote students' social and emotional skills in order to improve their academic achievement fall within the following categories:

- Testing
- Counseling Law/School Law
- Special Education/Data Analysis
- Leadership and Special Education.
- Social and Emotional Needs
- Academic and Career Counseling
- Classroom Guidance
- Consultation

Implications and Recommendations

It has been and continues to be an accepted dogma that a change must be made in the educational system. But, that change cannot just require more of educators in the already burdened schools as the previous and current reforms have done. We must provide the necessary resources to place protective factors around the shoulders of those students coming into school with such risk factors as would label them Students Placed at Risk.

We must break down this 800-pound gorilla known as the achievement gap in order to address the problem in a more systematic manner, which both addresses the academic achievement gap and the cultural differences. Yet, we know that change of any kind requires time, and educational change is no different. If we accept that change is gradual and that feedback along the way is important to achieving a major change, then we must provide counselors with time and feedback. Any consideration of program change at the university level should incorporate staff development and time for the staff to prepare in advance.

The recommendations of this study reflects an awareness of specific activities that, if accomplished within the counselor preparation program over time, would result in a more positive instructional experience for counseling students and counselor educators alike. These tasks include:

Recommendation 1: Establish working partnerships with universities, local school districts, and state educators to ensure agreement among counselor preparation programs, local school districts, and credentialing agencies about what school counselors should know and be able to do in their work with students in school settings. This will enable counselors to feel that the program satisfies the knowledge base needed to bring social responsibility into the academic arena in order to close the achievement gap. Paisley & McMahon (2001) agree with this partnership by saying, “Transforming these challenges into opportunities will require that school counselors and school counselor educators and supervisors collaborate in order to: (a) determine appropriate roles and areas of program

focus, (b) design and engage in necessary professional development, and (c) demonstrate accountability for outcomes.”

Recommendation 2: Provide opportunities in the preparation program for counselors to learn lobbying skills so that they can urge state educators and organizations to include social responsibility skills within the academic curriculum and other such factors that counselors feel impact student achievement.

Recommendation 3: Integrating counselor preparation courses at the university level with training experience in public school *early* so that counseling students practice what they are learning in class and, thus, feel competent in their role of helping to close the achievement gap.

Recommendation 4: Revise methods of supporting new counselors as they enter the profession and begin their work in schools, such as KCIP, mentoring, and carefully supervised practice.

Recommendation 5: Utilizing the following categories to offer courses within the program so that counselors feel that their preparation program does prepare them for the demands of the counselor position in relation to promoting students’ social and emotional skills so that their academic performance improves – especially those students that fall into the SPARS category:

- Testing

- Counseling Law/School Law
- Special Education/Data Analysis
- Leadership and Special Education
- Social and Emotional Needs
- Academic and Career Counseling
- Classroom Guidance
- Consultation

A training model that includes theory combined with demonstration, practice, feedback through coaching has been shown to be a most effective staff development model (Joyce and Showers, 1988). Such a model could be used to assist universities to take the actions that have been recommended within this study to improve instruction and thus close the achievement gap.

This study provides rich information for university preparation programs. The data is clear. The view into counselor's opinions of their preparation programs shows that counselors do not feel that the current program addresses the education and training needs as it should. The survey responses reveal occasional positive factors as well as problems to confront and solve. The challenge is to engage counselors in a systemic reflective process that further clarifies needs and then to link the opportunity for counselor development to student improvement.

The findings from this study may be used to further program development and implementation by university personnel and counselor educators of comprehensive

school counseling programs to train counselors in their role of promoting academic success in every student.

Implications for Future Research

This study was designed to provide insight into the current counselor preparation program. The recommended categories of courses represent relatively uncontroversial aspects of the preparation program according to the counselors who completed the survey. Future research could address the validation of other counselor preparation activities such as a program similar to KTIP for teachers and KPIP for principals which were not included in the present study, but which have been identified through the comment section of the survey as characteristic of an effective preparation program.

Building on the preliminary findings of the present study, researchers should investigate the influence of other variables on counselor ratings of preparation programs, including both counselor and counselor educator candidate variables. The findings of the present study suggest that counselors engaged in the counseling profession within all three levels of elementary, middle and high school feel that the program needs revision.

There are several areas for future follow-up research offered from findings in this study. A further study that contains a nationally represented sample survey school counselors from each region in the United States could be implemented using the survey instrument. This follow-up survey would increase generalizability of results of the perception of the counselor preparation program among practicing school counselors.

A qualitative study using interviews could be conducted in order to explore perceptions of practitioners regarding school counselor preparation programs. The qualitative study would enhance the scope of the research.

A nationally represented sample study can be conducted in order to analyze perceptions of counselors in their preparation programs, thus allowing for higher levels of generalizability. A further study of where the school counselors received their graduate training may also allow generalizability among graduate training programs by region or state levels. The study may additionally explore factors that may impede the counselor's ability to assist in closing the achievement gap so that school districts and graduate training programs may address these issues.

Study Limitations

The present study was subject to certain limitations. The limitations related to the site of the research, the sampling procedure, and the nature of the research design. The study participants were from a single southeastern state undergoing systemic school reform. Individuals from other geographic locations might have reacted differently to the focal selection practice than did the participants in this study. The research sample consisted of counselors from all districts within the southeastern state where the study took place. Accordingly, the results of this study should be generalized only to this population, or to other populations with similar characteristics located in the same geographic region.

Summary

The present study investigated how the counselor preparation programs prepare counselors to help increase student learning with providing the social and emotional support necessary to improve academic achievement and, thus, close the achievement gap. The study focused on the counselor, as the counselor is the part of the administration held most responsible for student support, and the one usually in more direct contact with the teachers – the front-line of our education system. The study found that counselors feel that a change in the preparation program is needed and offered recommendations toward that change for improvement.

This empirical evidence about factors that influence the counselor preparation program at elementary, middle, and high school levels can assist university personnel in making more useful decisions about the coursework to offer in the preparation program and other activities to include in the program. This study is a tentative step toward bridging the gap in understanding of the factors which influence students' abilities. "Transformed school counselors, unlike their predecessors who were school in individual and small-group interventions on behalf of selected students, will necessarily understand persons, groups, and organizations as complex systems that are embedded in a sociocultural context." (Hayes and Paisley, 2002) Hopefully, the results of this investigation and the empirical methodologies employed will stimulate greater interest in the utilization of the counselor in the closing the achievement by this understanding of persons, groups and organizations as complex systems and thereby contribute to the improvement of our nation's public schools.

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Appendix A

Instrument

SCHOOL COUNSELOR SURVEY

Dear Counselor or Counselor Educator,

You are being invited to participate in a research study by answering the attached survey about how counselors view their abilities to effect a positive change towards the achievement gap. There are no known risks for your participation in this research study. The information you provide will help to promote the career of both current and future school counselors. Your completed survey will be stored within the dissertation research of Susan R. Rose. The survey will take approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete.

Individuals from the Dept. of the Education, Counseling and Psychology Dept., the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO), and other regulatory agencies may inspect these records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. By completing this survey you agree to take part in this research study. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact Susan Rose at (502) 253 – 9859. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852 – 5188. You can discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the research staff, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this research study. If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please check or provide the below information that applies best to you. Your responses are anonymous and confidential.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Ethnicity: ☐ African American ☐ Asian American
☐ Hispanic ☐ Caucasian/European American
☐ Native American ☐ Other
3. Level of school(s) where you work: ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle
☐ High ☐ University
4. Position: ☐ Counselor ☐ Counselor/Principal/Teacher Educator
5. Highest Academic Degree Earned: ☐ Bachelors ☐ Masters
☐ Educational Specialist ☐ Doctorate
6. Years of Experience as a School Counselor/Counselor Educator:
☐ 0 – 5 ☐ 5 – 10 ☐ 10 – 15 ☐ 15 – 20 ☐ More than 20

II. CAUSE & EFFECT

Please circle the level of impact you feel the following has on closing the achievement gap	Negative Impact	No Impact	Low Impact	Medium Impact	High Impact
7. Smaller schools and charter schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8. Same gender schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9. Class-size reduction	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
10. Per Pupil expenditure above \$5,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11. After school programs	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12. Parent Involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
13. Leadership within the school	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14. Data use among counselors and administration	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

III. KNOWLEDGE BASE

How important are these factors to counselors in closing the achievement gap?	Not at all Important	Minimal Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important
15. Smaller schools and charter schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
16. Same gender schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
17. Class-size reduction	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
18. Per Pupil expenditure above \$5,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
19. After school programs	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
20. Parent Involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
21. Leadership within the school	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
22. Data use among counselors and administration	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

IV. CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN RELATION TO THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Please circle the number that best describes your reaction to the following statements.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. I believe that having all students participating in social and emotional/life skills programs including the teaching of character education traits, anger management, conflict resolution, peer mediation, etc. will increase academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24. I understand how to implement and operate a social and emotional skills program including the teaching of character education traits, anger management, conflict resolution, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
25. The connections between teaming and collaboration are that learning teams are highly collaborative teacher teams that engage in professional learning which continually engages in reflection, inquiry, problem solving and learning together to improve classroom instruction. I believe that learning communities which practice teaming and collaboration improves student achievement which closes the achievement gap.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
26. I have developed a clear understanding of diversity issues in my counselor preparation program.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
27. In my counselor education program, I learned how ethnic culture is related to student achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
28. My counselor preparation degree program helped me to feel confident in my leadership skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
29. My counselor preparation degree program helped me to feel confident in my abilities to advocate for all children.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
30. My counselor preparation degree program helped me to feel confident in my skills of counseling and coordination.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
31. My counselor preparation degree program helped me to feel prepared to use data and accountability to help the students in closing the achievement gap.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
32. My counselor preparation degree program helped me understand the ASCA standards as they relate to Counselors and follow them in my practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
33. My counselor preparation degree program helped to instill in me the belief that all students have the capacity to achieve.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

V. CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN RELATION TO COUNSELING

In thinking of your training as a Counselor, please respond to the following:	Never Seldom Sometimes Occasionally Frequently
34. How often did you have discussions with faculty about your counseling philosophy?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
35. How often did your receive feedback from a faculty member about your counseling skills?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
36. How often were you provided with opportunities to reflect on feedback about your counseling?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
37. How often did you observe someone counseling?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
38. How often did you have discussions with faculty about individual learning differences?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
In thinking of your training as a Counselor, please respond to the following:	Not at all Effective Somewhat Effective Neither Ineffective Nor Effective Very Effective
39. If you discussed your counseling philosophy with faculty, please rate the event's effectiveness in preparing you for counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
40. If you received feedback from a faculty member about your counseling skills, please rate the event's effectiveness in preparing you for counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
41. If you were given the opportunity to reflect on feedback about your counseling, please rate the event's effectiveness in preparing you for counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
42. If you observed someone counseling, please rate the event's effectiveness in preparing you for counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
43. If you had discussion with faculty about individual learning differences, please rate the event's effectiveness in preparing you to help close the achievement gap as a counselor.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

VI. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Please rate the following courses on two dimensions: <i>Respond only for those courses you completed</i>	1. the relevance to your preparation for addressing the achievement gap	2. the value of knowledge and skills gained in relation to the achievement gap
	None Substantial 1 2 3 4 5	Very Little 1 2 3 4 5 Very Much
44. Research Methods and Techniques	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
45. Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
46. Counseling Practicum	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
47. Internship	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
48. Intro. to Counseling & Psychotherapy	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
49. Evaluation & Measurement	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
50. Human Development	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
51. Career Development and Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
52. Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
53. Organization & Administration of School Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
54. School Guidance Programs and Services	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
55. Theories & Techniques of Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
56. Assessment Methods for Counselors	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
57. Group Process and Practice/Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
58. Professional ethics	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
59. Multicultural issues	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
60. Learning theory	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
61. Supervised research	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
62. Counseling Children and/or Adolescents	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

VII. COUNSELOR BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Please circle the number that best describes your reaction to the following statements.	Strongly Disagree					Neither Agree Nor Disagree			Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
63. I believe the courses above have been sufficient to prepare me to close the achievement gap.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
64. Children from low SES groups achieve at a lesser level than children from higher SES groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
65. District level personnel can improve the chances of students achieving at or above grade level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
66. Principals can improve the chances of students achieving at or above grade level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
67. School counselors can improve the chances of students achieving at or above grade level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
68. Teachers can improve the chances of students achieving at or above grade level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
69. Parents can improve the chances of students achieving at or above grade level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
70. Which role group has the most influence on closing the achievement gap?	District Personnel <input type="checkbox"/>	Principals <input type="checkbox"/>	Counselors <input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers <input type="checkbox"/>	Parents <input type="checkbox"/>					

VIII. SKILLS/EXPERIENCE RELATED TO CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Please indicate the relative amount of experience you gained in relation to the following activities in your counselor preparation program.	Very Little					Very Much				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
71. Individual counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
72. Small Group counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
73. Large Group Guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
74. Social and emotional/Life skills programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
75. Consultation with school personnel, parents, and community agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
76. Testing Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
77. Scheduling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
78. Record keeping/Paper work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
79. Diversity or multicultural issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
80. Career counseling and/or job placement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
81. College Admissions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

IX. CLOSING

82. What recommendations would you make to improve the Counselor Education program?

Please circle the number that best describes your reaction to the following statement.	Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Strongly Agree	
	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree
83. I have answered the above questions as honestly as I can.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	

If you would like to receive the results of this study, e-mail TheRoses1983@insightbb.com.

Once you have finished this survey, please click the “Mail to” line below to return to the author. If you are not using Microsoft Outlook (or the “Mail to” does not return the survey), please save this document to your desktop and attach it to an e-mail to the above address.

[Mailto:TheRoses1983@insightbb.com](mailto:TheRoses1983@insightbb.com)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

Email

CURRICULUM VITAE

Susan R. Rose

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Louisville, KY 40243
E-mail: CounselingToday@insightbb.com

Home phone: (502) 253 – 9859
Cell phone: (502) 468 – 1480

Education

Ph.D., University of Louisville 2007
Program: Counselor Education
Dissertation: *School Counselor Perceptions and Competencies for Closing the Achievement Gap: Implications for Counselor and Higher Education Programs for All Educators*

Rank 1, Counseling Psychology, University of Louisville 2001
Standard Certificate

M.A., Guidance Counseling, University of Louisville 1999
Graduated with honors, GPA: 3.5

B.S., Education, University of Louisville 1992
Graduated with highest honors, GPA: 3.8

Professional Experience

Professor

Indiana University Southeast Fall 2007 – Present
Responsible for teaching Childhood Development to a class of 25 students along with assessing student progress.

Counselor

Stopher Elementary School, Jefferson County Public Schools Fall 2007 – Present
Conway Middle School, Jefferson County Public Schools Spring 2007
Minors Lane Elementary, Jefferson County Public Schools 2003 – 2006
Bedford Elementary and Milton Elementary, Trimble County, Kentucky 2000 – 2003
Responsible for development, administration, and communication of all Guidance Curriculum Development and Counseling Services. Liaison for parents and community representatives. Chair of Student-Teacher Assistance Teams to establish interventions for students who may be experiencing difficulty. Chair of Special Education meetings (SBARC) where IEP's were developed. Meeting and consulting with parents, teachers, administrators, and the community. Working with students in small-group and individual sessions; Leading classroom/large group sessions on character education; providing curriculum for teacher based guidance. Policy implementation for student issues and parenting education curriculum. Maintenance of grants and contracts.

Teacher

Christian Academy of Louisville 1997 – 2000
Noe Middle School (JCPS) 1995 – 1997
Immaculate Conception, LaGrange, KY 1993 – 1994

Assessed needs of students to design and organize academic lessons using various educational software and creative designs; Prepared, implemented and instructed lessons for students to train and develop creative language and problem-solving skills; Conferenced with students on writing skills and open-response questions; Evaluated papers, etc. with excellent time management abilities; Record-keeping; Public relations to parents and community.

Bookkeeper/Controller

Arthur Young, Louisville, KY 1985 – 1988
Supervised bookkeeping and computer functions for a “Big 8” accounting firm. Managed installation of new accounting software. Hired and trained clerks. Co-produced financial statements and documents. Managed P/R, A/P, and A/R. Completed and filed tax returns. Filed and analyzed insurance claims.

Bookkeeper/Controller

Dowell & Dowell, Arlington, VA 1984 – 1985
Supervised bookkeeping and computer functions for Patent and Trademark attorneys. Searched patent and trademark records at U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Produced financial statements and documents. Managed Payroll, Accounts Payable, and Accounts Receivable. Completed and filed tax returns. Completed general bookkeeping duties.

Associated Professional Experience

Supervisor, University of Louisville Intern/Practicum students 2004
Provided supervision and professional consultation for master’s level counselors in intern and practicum sites.

Graduate Teaching Internship, Dept. of Counseling Psych., University of Louisville 2004
Theories of Counseling and Psychology

Families in Transition (FIT) Facilitator 2002 – 2003
Family Court–Henry, Oldham & Trimble Counties
Led elementary age group of the court-mandated counseling for divorced parents with children between the ages of 5 and 17 for the tri-county area. Managed program and facilitated counseling for the age group of 5 -11. Supervised and assisted with coordination of program between parents and children.

School Counselor Internship, Christian Academy of Louisville 1998 – 1999
Pre-masters school training experiences in guidance counseling, developmental interventions, and program development and consultation with various academic, administrative and counseling organizations. Development of small groups, workshops, and referral systems. Additional training in assessment and intervention with learning disabled students.

Publications

Rose, Susan R. Building a Champion Character: Primary Guidance Program. Parker, Colorado: Outskirts Press, Inc. 2006.

Rose, Susan R. Building a Champion Character: Intermediate Guidance Program. Parker, Colorado: Outskirts Press, Inc. 2006.

Presentations

Rose, Susan R. (2002). "Set-Up and Assembly Required." A workshop presented for elementary and middle school counselors. Kentucky Counselors Association Conference. October 2002.

Rose, Susan R. (2002). "Building a Champion Character". A workshop presented for elementary and middle school counselors. Kentucky School Counselors Conference. March 2002.

Rose, Susan R. (2001). "Building a Champion Character". A workshop presented for elementary and middle school counselors. Kentucky School Counselors Conference. March 2001.

Honors and Award

Colorado Independent Publishers Association Education and Literacy Foundation 2007
2007 "EVVY" Book Awards, 1st Place – Woodbooks for *Building a Champion Character, Primary Version*

Metropolitan Who's Who Among Executive and Professional Women 2007 – 2008
Honors 2007/2008 Edition

Community Service and Consulting Experience

Ky. School Counselor Association, Board of Directors
2003 – 2004

Family Court - Organizational Consultant, Oldham, Trimble, Henry Counties
2002 – 2003

Licenses and Certifications

Guidance and Counseling, Elementary Grades K – 8 12/14/99 – 06/30/08

Teaching in the Middle Grades 5 – 8, Languages Arts/Math 07/01/93 – 06/30/08

Selected University Service and Leadership

Member, Search Committee for ECPY Staff position
2005

Professional Memberships/Affiliations

American Counseling Association

Kentucky Counseling Association

American School Counselors Association

Kentucky School Counselors Association

Jefferson County School Counselors Association

Jefferson County Administrators of Schools Association

References

Available upon request.